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# SACRIFICE

AND OTHER PLAYS

BY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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**SANYASI,  
OR THE ASCETIC**

**"Lead us from the unreal to the real."**

TO

**DR. JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE**

# SANYASI, OR THE ASCETIC

## I

*Sanyasi, outside the cave*

THE division of days and nights is not for me, nor that of months and years. For me, the stream of time has stopped, on whose waves dances the world, like straws and twigs. In this dark cave I am alone, merged in myself,—and the eternal night is still, like a mountain lake afraid of its own depth. Water oozes and drips from the cracks, and in the pools float the ancient frogs. I sit chanting the incantation of nothingness. The world's limits recede, line after line.—The

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stars, like sparks of fire, flown from the anvil of time, are extinct ; and that joy is mine which comes to the God Shiva, when, after æons of dream, he wakes up to find himself alone in the heart of the infinite annihilation. I am free, I am the great solitary One. When I was thy slave, O Nature, thou didst set my heart against itself, and madest it carry the fierce war of suicide through its world. Desires, that have no other ends but to feed upon themselves and all that comes to their mouths, lashed me into fury. I ran about, madly chasing my shadow. Thou drovest me with thy lightning lashes of pleasure into the void of satiety. And the hungers, who are thy decoys, ever led me into the endless famine, where food turned into dust, and drink into vapour.

Till, when my world was spotted

with tears and ashes, I took my oath,  
that I would have revenge upon thee,  
interminable Appearance, mistress of  
endless disguises. I took shelter in  
the darkness,—the castle of the In-  
finite,—and fought the deceitful light,  
day after day, till it lost all its  
weapons and lay powerless at my feet.  
Now, when I am free of fear and  
desires, when the mist has vanished,  
and my reason shines pure and bright,  
let me go out into the kingdom of  
lies, and sit upon its heart, untouched  
and unmoved.

## II

*Sanyasi, by the roadside*

How small is this earth and confined, watched and followed by the persistent horizons. The trees, houses, and crowd of things are pressing upon my eyes. The light, like a cage, has shut out the dark eternity ; and the hours hop and cry within its barriers, like prisoned birds. But why are these noisy men rushing on, and for what purpose ? They seem always afraid of missing something,—the something that never comes to their hands.

[*The crowd passes.*

(Enter a VILLAGE ELDER and Two WOMEN.)

*First Woman*

O my, O my ! You *do* make me  
laugh.

*Second Woman*

But who says you are old ?

*Village Elder*

There are fools who judge men by  
their outside.

*First Woman*

How sad ! We have been watching  
your outside from our infancy. It is  
just the same all through these years.

*Village Elder*

Like the morning sun.

*First Woman*

Yes, like the morning sun in its  
shining baldness.

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*Village Elder*

Ladies, you are over-critical in your taste. You notice things that are unessential.

*Second Woman*

Leave off your chatter, Ananga. Let us hasten home, or my man will be angry.

*First Woman*

Good-bye, sir. Please judge us from our outside, we won't mind that.

*Village Elder*

Because you have no inside to speak of.

[*They go.*

(Enter THREE VILLAGERS.)

*First Villager*

Insult me? the scoundrel! He shall regret it.

*Second Villager*

He must be taught a thorough lesson.

*First Villager*

(A lesson that will follow him to his grave.)

*Third Villager*

Yes, brother, set your heart upon it. Never give him quarter.

*Second Villager*

He has grown too big.

*First Villager*

Big enough to burst at last.

*Third Villager*

The ants, when they begin to grow wings, perish.

*Second Villager*

But have you got a plan ?

*First Villager*

Not one, but hundreds. I will drive my ploughshare over his household.—I will give him a donkey-ride through the town, with his cheeks painted white and black. I will make the world too hot for him, and—

[*They go.*]

(Enter Two STUDENTS.)

*First Student*

I am sure Professor Madhab won in the debate.

*Second Student*

No, it was Professor Janardan.

*First Student*

Professor Madhab maintained his point to the last. He said that the subtle is the outcome of the gross.

*Second Student*

But Professor Janardan conclusively proved that the subtle is the origin of the gross.

*First Student*

Impossible.

*Second Student*

It is clear as the daylight.

*First Student*

Seeds come from the tree.

*Second Student*

The tree comes from the seed.

*First Student*

Sanyasi, which of these is true ?  
Which is the original, the subtle or  
the gross ?

*Sanyasi*

Neither.

*Second Student*

Neither. Well, that sounds satisfactory.

*Sanyasi*

The origin is the end, and the end is the origin. It is a circle.—The distinction between the subtle and gross is in your ignorance.

*First Student*

Well, it sounds very simple—and I think this was what my master meant.

*Second Student*

Certainly this agrees more with what  
*my* master teaches.

[*They go out.*

*Sanyasi*

These birds are word-peckers. When they pick up some wriggling nonsense, which can fill their mouth, they are happy.

(Enter Two FLOWER-GIRLS, *singing.*)

*Song*

*The weary hours pass by.*

*The flowers that blossom in the light  
Fade and drop in the shadow.*

*I thought I would weave a garland  
In the cool of the morning for my love.*

*But the morning wears on,  
The flowers are not gathered,  
And my love is lost.*

*A Wayfarer*

Why such regret, my darlings ?  
When the garlands are ready, the  
necks will not be wanting.)

*First Flower-Girl*

Nor the halter.

*Second Flower-Girl*

You are bold. Why do you come  
so close ?

*Wayfarer*

You quarrel for nothing, my girl.  
I am far enough from you to allow an  
elephant to pass between us.

*Second Flower-Girl*

Indeed. Am I such a fright ? I  
wouldn't have eaten you, if you had  
come. [They go out laughing.]

(*Comes an old BEGGAR.*)

*Beggar*

Kind sirs, have pity on me. May God prosper you. Give me one handful from your plenty.

(*Enters a SOLDIER.*)

*Soldier*

Move away. Don't you see the Minister's son is coming ?

[*They go out.*

*Sanyasi*

It is mid-day. The sun is growing strong. The sky looks like an overturned burning copper bowl. The earth breathes hot sighs, and the whirling sands dance by. What sights of man have I seen ! Can I ever again shrink back into the smallness of these creatures, and become one of them ?

No, I am free. I have not this obstacle, this world round me. I live in a pure desolation.

(*Enter the girl VASANTI and a WOMAN.*)

*Woman*

Girl, you are Raghu's daughter, aren't you ? You should keep away from this road. Don't you know it goes to the temple ?

*Vasanti*

I am on the farthest side, Lady.

*Woman*

But I thought my cloth-end touched you. I am taking my offerings to the goddess,—I hope they are not polluted.

*Vasanti*

I assure you, your cloth did not touch me. (*The WOMAN goes.*) I am Vasanti, Raghu's daughter. May I come to you, father ?

*Sanyasi*

Why not, child ?

*Vasanti*

I am a pollution, as they call me.

*Sanyasi*

But they are all that,—a pollution.  
They roll in the dust of existence.  
Only he is pure who has washed away  
the world from his mind. But what  
have you done, daughter ?

*Vasanti*

My father, who is dead, had defied their laws and their gods. He would not perform their rites.

*Sanyasi*

Why do you stand away from me ?

*Vasanti*

Will you touch me ?

*Sanyasi*

Yes, because nothing can touch me truly; I am ever away in the endless. You can sit here, if you wish.

*Vasanti*

(*Breaking into a sob.*) Never tell me to leave you, when once you have taken me near you.

*Sanyasi*

Wipe away your tears, child. I am a Sanyasi. I have neither hatred, nor attachment in my heart.—I never claim you as mine; therefore I can never discard you. You are to me as this blue sky is,—you are,—yet you are not.

*Vasanti*

Father, I am deserted by gods and men alike.

*Sanyasi*

So am I. I have deserted both gods and men.

*Vasanti*

You have no mother ?

*Sanyasi*

No.

*Vasanti*

Nor father ?

*Sanyasi*

No.

*Vasanti*

Nor any friend ?

*Sanyasi*

No.

*Vasanti*

Then I shall be with you.—You won't leave me ?

*Sanyasi*

I have done with leaving. You can stay near me, yet never coming near me

*Vasanti*

I do not understand you, father. Tell me, is there no shelter for me in the whole world ?

*Sanyasi*

Shelter ? Don't you know this world is a bottomless chasm ? The swarm of creatures, coming out from the hole of nothingness, seeks for shelter, and enters into the gaping mouth of this emptiness, and is lost. These are the ghosts of lies around you, who hold their market of illu-

sions,—and the foods which they sell are shadows. They only deceive your hunger, but do not satisfy. Come away from here, child, come away.

*Vasanti*

But, father, they seem so happy in this world. Can we not watch them from the roadside ?

*Sanyasi*

Alas, they do not understand. They cannot see that this world is death spread out to eternity.—It dies every moment, yet never comes to the end. —And we, the creatures of this world, live by feeding upon death.

*Vasanti*

Father, you frighten me.

(Enters a TRAVELLER.)

*Traveller*

Can I get a shelter near this place ?

*Sanyasi*

Shelter there is nowhere, my son,  
but in the depth of one's self.—Seek  
that ; hold to it fast, if you would be  
saved.

*Traveller*

But I am tired, and want shelter.

*Vasanti*

My hut is not far from here. Will  
you come ?

*Traveller*

But who are you ?

*Vasanti*

Must you know me ? I am Raghu's  
daughter.

*Traveller*

God bless you, child, but I cannot  
stay. [Goes.

(*Men come bearing somebody on a bed.*)

*First Bearer*

He is still asleep.

*Second Bearer*

How heavy the rascal is !

*A Traveller (outside their group)*

Whom do you carry ?

*Third Bearer*

Bindé, the weaver, was sleeping as one dead, and we have taken him away.

*Second Bearer*

But I am tired, brothers. Let us give him a shake, and waken him up.

*Bindé (wakes up)*

Ee, a, u—

*Third Bearer*

What's that noise ?

*Bindé*

I say. Who are you ? Where am I being carried ?

[*They put down the bed from their shoulders.*

*Third Bearer*

Can't you keep quiet, like all decent dead people ?

*Second Bearer*

The cheek of him ! He must talk even though he is dead.

*Third Bearer*

It would be more proper of you, if you kept still.

*Bindé*

I am sorry to disappoint you, gentlemen, you have made a mistake.—I was not dead, but fast asleep.

*Second Bearer*

I admire this fellow's impudence: Not only must he die, but argue.

*Third Bearer*

He won't confess the truth. Let us go, and finish the rites of the dead.

*Bindé*

I swear by your beard, my brother, I am as alive as any of you.

[They take him away, laughing.]

*Sanyasi*

The girl has fallen asleep, with her arm beneath her little head. I think

I must leave her now, and go. But, coward, must you run away,—run away from this tiny thing ? These are Nature's spiders' webs, they have danger merely for moths, and not for a Sanyasi like me.

*Vasanti (awaking with a start)*

Have you left me, Master ?—Have you gone away ?

*Sanyasi*

Why should I go away from you ?  
What fear have I ? Afraid of a shadow ?

*Vasanti*

Do you hear the noise in the road ?

*Sanyasi*

But stillness is in my soul.

(Enters a young WOMAN, followed by MEN.)

*Woman*

Go now. Leave me. Don't talk  
to me of love.

*First Man*

Why, what has been my crime ?

*Woman*

You men have hearts of stone.

*First Man*

Incredible. If our hearts were of  
stone, how could Cupid's darts make  
damage there ?

*Other Man*

Bravo. Well said.

*Second Man*

Now, what is your answer to that,  
my dear ?

*Woman*

Answer ! You think you have said something very fine,—don't you ? It is perfect rubbish.

*First Man*

I leave it to your judgment, gentlemen. What I said was this, that if our hearts be of stone, how can——

*Third Man*

Yes, yes, it has no answer at all.

*First Man*

Let me explain it to you. She said we men have hearts of stone, didn't she ? Well, I said, in answer, if our hearts were truly of stone, how could Cupid's darts damage them ? You understand ?

~nded  
*Second Man*                   'en

Brother, I have been selling molasses in the town for the last twenty-four years,—do you think I cannot understand what you say ?

[*They go out.*

*Sanyasi*

What are you doing, my child ?

*Vasanti*

I am looking at your broad palm, father. My hand is a little bird that finds its nest here. Your palm is great, like the great earth which holds all. These lines are the rivers, and these are hills.

[*Puts her cheek upon it.*

*Sanyasi*

Your touch is soft, my daughter, like the touch of sleep. It seems to

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this touch has something of the great darkness, which touches one's soul with the wand of the eternal.— But, child, you are the moth of the daylight. You have your birds and flowers and fields—what can you find in me, who have my centre in the One and my circumference nowhere ?

*Vasanti .*

I do not want anything else. Your love is enough for me.

*Sanyasi*

The girl imagines I love her,— foolish heart. She is happy in that thought. Let her nourish it. For they have been brought up in illusions, and they must have illusions to console them.

*Vasanti*

Father, this creeper trailing on the grass, seeking some tree to twine itself

round, is my creeper. I have tended it and watered it from the time when it had pushed up only two little leaves into the air, like an infant's cry. This creeper is me,—it has grown by the road-side, it can be so easily crushed. Do you see these beautiful little flowers, pale blue with white spots in their hearts?—these white spots are their dreams. Let me gently brush your forehead with these flowers. To me, things that are beautiful are the keys to all that I have not seen and not known.

*Sanyasi*

No, no, the beautiful is mere phantasy. To him who knows, the dust and the flower are the same.—But what languor is this that is creeping into my blood and drawing before my eyes a thin mist veil of all the rainbow colours ? Is it Nature herself weaving

her dreams round me, clouding my senses ? (*Suddenly he tears the creeper, and rises up.*) No more of this ; for this is death. What game of yours is this with me, little girl ? I am a Sanyasi, I have cut all my knots, I am free.—No, no, not those tears. I cannot bear them.—But where was hidden in my heart this snake, this anger, that hissed out of its dark with its fang ? No, they are not dead,—they outlive starvation. These hell-creatures clatter their skeletons and dance in my heart, when their mistress, the great witch, plays upon her magic flute.—Weep not, child, come to me. You seem to me like a cry of a lost world, like the song of a wandering star. You bring to my mind something, which is infinitely more than this Nature,—more than the sun and stars. It is as great as the darkness. I understand it not. I have

never known it, therefore I fear it.  
I must leave you.—Go back whence  
you came,—the messenger of the un-  
known.

*Vasanti*

Leave me not, father,—I have none  
else but you.

*Sanyasi*

I must go, I thought that I had  
known,—but I do not know. Yet I  
must know. I leave you, to know  
who you are.

*Vasanti*

Father, if you leave me, I shall die.

*Sanyasi*

Let go my hand. Do not touch  
me. I must be free.—

[*He runs away.*

## III

(*The SANYASI is seen, sitting upon a boulder in a mountain path. A shepherd boy passes by, singing.*)

## THE SONG

*Do not turn away your face, my love,  
The spring has bared open its breast.  
The flowers breathe their secrets in  
the dark.  
The rustle of the forest leaves comes  
across the sky.  
Like the sobs of the night.  
Come, love, show me your face.*

*Sanyasi*

*The gold of the evening is melting  
in the heart of the blue sea. The  
forest, on the hillside, is drinking the*

last cup of the daylight. On the left, the village huts are seen through the trees with their evening lamps lighted, like a veiled mother watching by her sleeping children. Nature, thou art my slave. Thou hast spread thy many-coloured carpet in the great hall where I sit alone, like a king, and watch thee dance with thy starry necklace twinkling on thy breast.

[SHEPHERD GIRLS *pass by, singing.*

#### SONG OF THE SHEPHERD GIRLS

*The music comes from across the dark river and calls me.*

*I was in the house and happy.*

*But the flute sounded in the still air of night,*

*And a pain pierced my heart.*

*Oh, tell me the way who know it,—*

*Tell me the way to him.*

*I will go to him with my one little flower,*

*And leave it at his feet,  
And tell him that his music is one  
with my love.*

[*They go.*

*Sanyasi*

I think such an evening had come to me only once before in all my births. Then its cup overbrimmed with love and music, and I sat with some one, the memory of whose face is in that setting star of the evening.— But where is my little girl, with her dark sad eyes, big with tears ? Is she there, sitting outside her hut, watching that same star through the immense loneliness of the evening ? But the star must set, the evening close her eyes in the night, and tears must cease and sobs be stilled in sleep. No, I will not go back. Let the world-dreams take their own shape. Let me not trouble its course and create

new phantasies. I will see, and think, and know.

(*Enters a ragged GIRL.*)

*Girl*

Are you there, father ?

*Sanyasi*

Come, child, sit by me. I wish I could own that call of yours. Some one did call me father, once, and the voice was somewhat like yours. The father answers now,—but where is that call ?

*Girl*

Who are you ?

*Sanyasi*

I am a Sanyasi Tell me, child, what is your father ?

*Girl*

He gathers sticks from the forest.

*Sanyasi*

And you have a mother ?

*Girl*

No. She died when I was young.

*Sanyasi*

Do you love your father ?

*Girl*

I love him more than anything else in the world. I have no one else but him.

*Sanyasi*

I understand you. Give me your little hand,—let me hold it in my palm,—in this big palm of mine.

*Girl*

Sanyasi, do you read palms ? Can you read in my palm all that I am and shall be ?

*Second Friend*

Let us salute those stars which *did* throw us together. If for a moment, still it has been much.

*First Friend*

Look back for a minute before you go. Can you see that faint glimmer of the water in the dark, and those *casuarina* trees on the sandy bank ? Our village is all one heap of dark shadows. You can only see the lights. Can you guess which of those lights are ours ?

*Second Friend*

Yes, I think I can.

*First Friend*

That light is the last farewell look of our past days upon their parting

guest. A little farther on, and there will remain one blot of darkness.

[*They go away.*

a  
**Sanyasi**

The night grows dark and desolate. It sits like a woman forsaken,—those stars are her tears turned into fire. O my child, the sorrow of your little heart has filled, for ever, all the nights of my life with its sadness. Your dear caressing hand has left its touch in this night air,—I feel it on my forehead,—it is damp with your tears. My darling, your sobs that pursued me, when I fled away, have clung to my heart. I shall carry them to my death.

## IV

*Sanyasi, in the village path*

Let my vows of Sanyasi go. I break my staff and my alms-bowl. This stately ship, this world, which is crossing the sea of time,—let it take me up again, let me join once more the pilgrims. Oh the fool, who wanted to seek safety in swimming alone, and gave up the light of the sun and stars, to pick his way with his glow-worm's lamp ! The bird flies in the sky, not to fly away into the emptiness, but to come back again to this great earth.—I am free. I am free from the bodiless chain of the Nay. I am free among things, and forms and purpose. The finite is the true infinite, and love knows its truth. My

girl, you are the spirit of all that is,—  
I can never leave you.

(Enters a VILLAGE ELDER.)

*Sanyasi*

Do you know, brother, where  
Raghu's daughter is ?

*Elder*

She has left her village, and we are  
glad.

*Sanyasi*

Where has she gone ?

*Elder*

Do you ask where ? It is all one  
to her where she goes. [Goes out.

*Sanyasi*

My darling has gone to seek a somewhere  
in the emptiness of nowhere.  
She must find me.

(*A crowd of Villagers enter.*)

*First Man*

So our King's son is going to be married to-night.

*Second Man*

Can you tell me, when is the wedding hour ?

*Third Man*

The wedding hour is only for the bridegroom and the bride. What have we got to do with it ?

*A Woman*

But won't they give us cakes for the happy day ?

*First Man*

Cakes ? You are silly. My uncle lives in the town--I have heard from him that we shall have curds and parched rice.

*Second Man*

Grand.

*Fourth Man*

But we shall have a great deal more water than curds. You may be sure of that.

*First Man*

Moti, you are a dull fellow. Water in the curds at a prince's wedding !

*Fourth Man*

But we are not princes ourselves, Panchu. For us, poor people, the curds have the trick of turning into water most parts.

*First Man*

Look there. That son of the charcoal-burner is still busy with his work. We mustn't allow that.

*Second Man*

We shall burn him into charcoal,  
if he does not come out.

*Sanyasi*

Do you know, any of you, where is  
Raghu's daughter ?

*The Woman*

She has gone away.

*Sanyasi*

Where ?

*Woman*

That we don't know.

*First Man*

But we are sure that she is not the  
bride for our prince.

[They laugh and go out.]

(*Enters a WOMAN, with a child.*)

*Woman*

My obeisance to you, father. Let my child touch your feet with his head. He is sick. Bless him, father.

*Sanyasi*

But, daughter, I am no longer a Sanyasi. Do not mock me with your salutation.

*Woman*

Then who are you ? What are you doing ?

*Sanyasi*

I am seeking.

*Woman*

Seeking whom ?

*Sanyasi*

Seeking my lost world back.—Do you know Raghu's daughter ? Where is she ?

*Woman*

Raghu's daughter ? She is dead.

*Sanyasi*

No, she cannot be dead. No. No.

*Woman*

But what is her death to you, Sanyasi ?

*Sanyasi*

Not only to me ; it would be death to all.

.

*Woman*

I do not understand you.

*Sanyasi*

She can never be dead.



**MALINI**

**TO  
MY NIECE  
INDIRA DEVI**

## MALINI

### ACT I

*The Balcony of the Palace facing the street*

*Malini*

The moment has come for me, and my life, like the dewdrop upon a lotus leaf, is trembling upon the heart of this great time. I shut my eyes and seem to hear the tumult of the sky, and there is an anguish in my heart, I know not for what.

(Enters QUEEN.)

*Queen*

My child, what is this? Why do you forget to put on dresses that befit

your beauty and youth ? Where are your ornaments ? My beautiful dawn, how can you absent the touch of gold from your limbs ?

*Malini*

Mother, there are some who are born poor, even in a king's house. Wealth does not cling to those whose destiny it is to find riches in poverty.

*Queen*

That the child whose only language was the baby cry should talk to me in such riddles !—My heart quakes in fear when I listen to you. Where did you pick up your new creed, which goes against all our holy books ? My child, they say that the Buddhist monks, from whom you take your lessons, practise black arts ; that they cast their spells upon men's minds, confounding them with lies. But I

ask you, is re*Queen*  
**has to find by** ! Arc all truths con-  
 sunlight, given <sup>r</sup> musty old books ?  
 I am a simple <sup>r</sup> their worm-eaten  
 understand men's <sup>c</sup> take their lessons  
 I only know that won't <sup>u</sup>, King, she  
 of worship come to th <sup>is\*\*\*</sup> <sup>ure</sup>  
 without asking, in the s <sup>ape</sup> of their  
 husbands and their children.

(*Enters KING.*)

*King*

My daughter, storm clouds are  
 gathering over the King's house. Go  
 no farther along your perilous path.  
 Pause, if only for a short time.

*Queen*

What dark words are these ?

*King*

My foolish child, if you must bring  
 your new creed into this land of the

your beauty and you like a sudden  
your ornaments ? My who dwell on  
how can you absent fr faith to your  
from your limbs ? up public hatred  
inst it.

*Mother, Queen*

' Do not chide my girl, and teach her  
the crookedness of your diplomacy.  
If my child should choose her own  
teachers and pursuc her own path, I  
do not know who can blame her.

*King*

Queen, my people are agitated, they  
clamour for my daughter's banish-  
ment.

*Queen*

Banishment ? Of your own  
daughter ?

*King*

The Brahmins, frightened at her  
heresy, have combined, and—

*Queen*

Heresy indeed ! Arc all truths confined only in their musty old books ? Let them fling away their worm-eaten creeds, and come and take their lessons from this child. I tell you, King, she is not a common girl,—she is a pure flame of fire. Some divine spirit has taken birth in her. Do not despise her, lest some day you strike your forehead, and weep, and find her no more.

*Malini*

Father, grant to your people their request. The great moment has come. Banish me.

*King*

Why, child ? What want do you feel in your father's house ?

*Malini*

Listen to me, father. Those, who cry for my banishment, cry for me.

Mother, I have no words in which to tell you what I have in my mind. Leave me without regret, like the tree that sheds its flowers unheeding. Let me go out to all men,—for the world has claimed me from the King's hands.

*King*

Child, I do not understand you.

*Malini*

Father, you are a King. Be strong and fulfil your mission.

*Queen*

Child, is there no place for you here, where you were born? Is the burden of the world waiting for your little shoulders?

*Malini*

I dream, while I am awake, that the wind is wild, and the water is

troubled ; the night is dark, and the boat is moored in the haven. Where is the captain, who shall take the wanderers home ? I feel I know the path, and the boat will thrill with life at my touch, and speed on.

*Queen*

Do you hear, King ? Whose words are these ? Do they come from this little girl ? Is she your daughter, and have I borne her ?

*King*

Yes, even as the night bears the dawn,—the dawn that is not of the night, but of all the world.

*Queen*

King, have you nothing to keep her bound to your house,—this image of light ?—My darling, your hair has come loose on your shoulders. Let

me bind it up.—Do they talk of banishment, King ? If this be a part of their creed, then let come the new religion, and let those Brahmins be taught afresh what is truth.

*King*

Queen, let us take away our child from this balcony. Do you see the crowd gathering in the street ?

[*They all go out.*

(Enter a crowd of BRAHMINS, in the street, before the palace balcony. They shout.)

*Brahmins*

Banishment of the King's daughter !

*Kemankar*

Friends, keep your resolution firm. The woman, as an enemy, is to be dreaded more than all others. For reason is futile against her and forces

are ashamed ; man's power gladly surrenders itself to her powerlessness, and she takes her shelter in the strongholds of our own hearts.

*First Brahmin*

We must have audience with our King, to tell him that a snake has raised its poisonous hood from his own nest, and is aiming at the heart of our sacred religion.

*Supriya*

Religion ? I am stupid. I do not understand you. Tell me, sir, is it your religion that claims the banishment of an innocent girl ?

*First Brahmin*

You are a marplot, Supriya, you are ever a hindrance to all our enterprises.

*Second Brahmin*

We have united in defence of our faith, and you come like a subtle rift, in the wall, like a thin smile on the compressed lips of contempt.

*Supriya*

You think that, by the force of numbers, you will determine truth, and drown reason by your united shouts ?

*First Brahmin*

This is rank insolence, Supriya.

*Supriya*

The insolence is not mine but theirs who shape their scripture to fit their own narrow hearts.

*Second Brahmin*

Drive him out. He is none of us.

*First Brahmin*

We have all agreed upon the banishment of the Princess.—He who thinks differently, let him leave this assembly.

*Supriya*

Brahmins, it was a mistake on your part to elect me as one of your league. I am neither your shadow, nor an echo of your texts. I never admit that truth sides with the shrillest voice, and I am ashamed to own as mine a creed that depends on force for its existence. (*To KEMANKAR.*) Dear friend, let me go.

*Kemankar*

No, I will not. I know you are firm in your action, only doubting when you debate. Keep silence, my friend ; for the time is evil.

*Supriya*

Of all things the blind certitude of stupidity is the hardest to bear. To think of saving your religion by banishing a girl from her home ! But let me know what is her offence. Does she not maintain that truth and love are the body and soul of religion ? If so, is that not the essence of all creeds ?

*Kemankar*

Religion is one in its essence, but different in its forms. The water is one, yet by its different banks it is bounded and preserved for different peoples. What if you have a well-spring of your own in your heart, spurn not your neighbours who must go for their draught of water to their ancestral pond with the green of its gradual slopes mellowed by ages and its ancient trees bearing eternal fruit.

*Supriya*

I shall follow you, my friend, as I have ever done in my life, and not argue.

(*Enters third BRAHMIN.*)

*Third Brahmin*

I have good news. Our words have prevailed, and the King's army is about to take our side openly.

*Second Brahmin*

The army ?—I do not quite like it.

*First Brahmin*

Nor do I. It smells of rebellion.

*Second Brahmin*

Kemankar, I am not for such extreme measures.

*First Brahmin*

Our faith will give us victory, not our arms. Let us make penance, and recite sacred verses. Let us call on the names of our guardian gods.

*Second Brahmin*

Come, Goddess, whose wrath is the sole weapon of thy worshippers, deign to take form and crush even to dust the blind pride of unbelievers. Prove to us the strength of our faith, and lead us to victory.

*All*

We invoke thee, Mother, descend from thy heavenly heights and do thy work among mortals.

(*Enters MALINI.*)

*Malini*

I have come. (*They all bow to her, except KEMANKAR and SUPRIYA, who stand aloof and watch.*)

*Second Brahmin*

Goddess.—Thou hast come at last, as a daughter of man, withdrawing all thy terrible power into the tender beauty of a girl. Whence hast thou come, Mother ? What is thy wish ?

*Malini*

I have come down to my exile at your call.

*Second Brahmin*

To exile from heaven, because thy children of earth have called thee ?

*First Brahmin*

Forgive us, Mother. Utter ruin threatens this world and it cries aloud for thy help.

*Malini*

I will never desert you. I always knew that your doors were open for

me. The cry went from you for my banishment and I woke up, amidst the wealth and pleasure of the King's house.

*Kemankar*

The Princess.

*All*

The King's daughter.

*Malini*

I am exiled from my home, so that I may make your home my own. Yet tell me truly, have you need of me? When I lived in seclusion, a lonely girl, did you call to me from the outer world? Was it no dream of mine?

*First Brahmin*

Mother, you have come, and taken your seat in the heart of our hearts.

*Malini*

I was born in a King's house, never once looking out from my window. I had heard that it was a sorrowing world,—the world out of my reach. But I did not know where it felt its pain. Teach me to find this out.

*First Brahmin*

Your sweet voice brings tears to our eyes.

*Malini*

The moon has just come out of those clouds. Great peace is in the sky. It seems to gather all the world in its arms, under the fold of one vast moonlight. There goes the road, losing itself among the solemn trees with their still shadows. There are the houses, and there the temple; the river bank in the distance looks dim

and desolate. I seem to have come down, like a sudden shower from a cloud of dreams, into this world of men, by the roadside.

*First Brahmin*

You are the divine soul of this world.

*Second Brahmin*

Why did not our tongues burst in pain, when they shouted for your banishment ?

*First Brahmin*

Come, Brahmins, let us restore our Mother to her home.

[*They shout.*

Victory to the Mother of the world !  
Victory to the Mother in the heart  
of the Man's daughter !

[*MALINI goes, surrounded by them.*

*Kemankar*

Let the illusion vanish. Where are you going, Supriya, like one walking in his sleep ?

*Supriya*

Leave hold of me, let me go.

*Kemankar*

Control yourself. Will you, too, fly into the fire with the rest of the blinded swarm ?

*Supriya*

Was it a dream, Kemankar ?

*Kemankar*

It was nothing but a dream. Open your eyes, and wake up.

*Supriya*

Your hope of heaven is false, Kemankar. Vainly have I wandered in

the wilderness of doctrines,—I never found peace. The God, who belongs to the multitude, and the God of the books are not my own God. These never answered my questions and never consoled me. But, at last, I have found the divine breathing and alive in the living world of men.

*Kemankar*

Alas, my friend, it is a fearful moment when a man's heart deceives him. Then blind desire becomes his gospel and fancy usurps the dread throne of his gods. Is yonder moon, lying asleep among soft fleecy clouds, the true emblem of everlasting reality? The naked day will come to-morrow, and the hungry crowd begin again to draw the sea of existence with their thousand nets. And then this moonlight night will hardly be remembered, but as a thin film of unreality made of

sleep and shadows and delusions. The magic web, woven of the elusive charms of a woman, is like that,—and can it take the place of highest truth ? Can any creed, born of your fancy, satisfy the gaping thirst of the mid-day, when it is wide awake in its burning heat ?

*Supriya*

Alas, I know not.

*Kemankar*

Then shake yourself up from your dreams, and look before you. The ancient house is on fire, whose nurslings are the ages. The spirits of our forefathers are hovering over the impending ruins, like crying birds over their perishing nests. Is this the time for vacillation, when the night is dark, the enemies knocking at the gate, the citizens asleep, and men drunken with

delusions laying their hands upon  
their brothers' throats ?

*Supriya*

I will stand by you.

*Kemankar*

I must go away from here.

*Supriya*

Where ? And for what ?

*Kemankar*

To foreign lands. I shall bring  
soldiers from outside. For this con-  
flagration cries for blood, to be  
quenched.

*Supriya*

But our own soldiers are ready.

*Kemankar*

Vain is all hope of help from them.  
They, like moths, are already leaping

into the fire. Do you not hear how they are shouting like fools ? The whole town has gone mad, and is lighting her festival lamps at the funeral pyre of her own sacred faith.

*Supriya*

If you must go, take me with you.

*Kemankar*

No. You remain here, to watch and keep me informed. But, friend, let your heart be not drawn away from me by the novelty of the falsehood.

*Sup iya*

Falsehood is new, but our friendship is old. We have ever been together from our childhood. This is our first separation.

*Kemankar*

May it prove our last ! In evil times the strongest bonds give way.

Brothers strike brothers and friends turn against friends. I go out into the dark, and in the darkness of night I shall come back to the gate. Shall I find my friend watching for me, with the lamp lighted ? I take away that hope with me. [They go.

(Enter KING, with the PRINCE, in the balcony.)

*King*

I fear I must decide to banish my daughter.

*Prince*

Yes, Sire, delay will be dangerous.

*King*

Gently, my son, gently. Never doubt that I will do my duty. Be sure I will banish her.

[PRINCE goes.

(*Enters QUEEN.*)

Tell me, King, where is she ? Have you hidden her, even from me ?

*King*

Whom ?

*Queen*

My Malini.

*King*

What ? Is she not in her room ?

*Queen*

No, I cannot find her. Go with your soldiers and search for her through all the town, from house to house. The citizens have stolen her. Banish them all. Empty the whole town, till they return her.

*King*

I will bring her back,—even if my Kingdom goes to ruin.

[*The BRAHMINS and soldiers bring MALINI, with torches lighted.*

*Queen*

My darling, my cruel child. I never  
keep my eyes off you,—how could  
you evade me, and go out ?

*Second Brahmin*

Do not be angry with her, Queen.  
She came to our home to give us her  
blessings.

*First Brahmin*

Is she only yours ? And does she  
not belong to us as well ?

*Second Brahmin*

Our little mother, do not forget us.  
You are our star, to lead us across  
the pathless sea of life.

*Malini*

My door has been opened for you.  
These walls will nevermore separate  
us.

*Brahmins*

Blessed are we, and the land where  
we were born. [They go.

*Malini*

Mother, I have brought the outer  
world into your house. I seem to  
have lost the bounds of my body. I  
am one with the life of this world.

*Queen*

Yes, child. Now you shall never  
need to go out. Bring in the world  
to you, and to your mother.—It is  
close upon the second watch of the  
night. Sit here. Calm yourself. This  
flaming life in you is burning out all  
sleep from your eyes.

*Malini*

(Embracing her mother.) Mother, I  
am tired. My body is trembling. So

vast is this world.—Mother dear, sing me to sleep. Tears come to my eyes, and a sadness descends upon my heart.

## ACT II

*The Palace Garden*

MALINI and SUPRIYA

*Malini*

What can I say to you? I do not know how to argue. I have not read your books.

*Supriya*

I am learned only among the fools of learning. I have left all arguments and books behind me. Lead me, princess, and I shall follow you, as the shadow follows the lamp.

*Malini*

But, Brahmin, when you question me, I lose all my power and do not

know how to answer you. It is a wonder to me to see that even you, who know everything, come to me with your questions.

*Supriya*

Not for knowledge I come to you.  
Let me forget all that I have ever  
known. Roads there are, without  
number, but the light is missing.

*Malini*

Alas, sir, the more you ask me, the  
more I feel my poverty. Where is  
that voice in me, which came down  
from heaven, like an unseen flash of  
lightning, into my heart ? Why did  
you not come that day, but keep away  
in doubt ? Now that I have met  
the world face to face my heart has  
grown timid, and I do not know how  
to hold the helm of the great ship  
that I must guide. I feel I am alone,

and the world is large, and ways are many, and the light from the sky comes of a sudden to vanish the next moment. You who are wise and learned, will you help me ?

*Supriya*

I shall deem myself fortunate, if you ask my help.

*Malini*

There are times when despair comes to choke all the life-currents ; when suddenly, amidst crowds of men, my eyes turn upon myself and I am frightened. Will you befriend me in those moments of blankness, and utter me one word of hope that will bring me back to life ?

*Supriya*

I shall keep myself ready. I shall make my heart simple and pure, and

my mind peaceful, to be able truly to serve you.

(*Enters ATTENDANT.*)

*Attendant*

The citizens have come, asking to see you.

*Malini*

Not to-day. Ask their pardon for me. I must have time to fill my exhausted mind, and have rest to get rid of weariness. (*ATTENDANT goes.*) Tell me again about Kemankar, your friend. I long to know what your life has been and its trials.

*Supriya*

Kemankar is my friend, my brother, my master. His mind has been firm and strong, from early days, while my thoughts are always flickering with

doubts. Yet he has ever kept me close to his heart, as the moon does its dark spots. But, however strong a ship may be, if it harbours a small hole in its bottom, it must sink.—That I would make you sink, Kemankar, was in the law of nature.

*Malini*

You made him sink ?

*Supriya*

Yes, I did. The day when the rebellion slunk away in shame before the light in your face and the music in the air that touched you, Kemankar alone was unmoved. He left me behind him, and said that he must go to the foreign land to bring soldiers, and uproot the new creed from the sacred soil of Kashi.—You know what followed. You made me live again in a new land of birth. “ Love for

all life " was a mere word, waiting from the old time to be made real,—and I saw that truth in you in flesh. My heart cried for my friend, but he was away, out of my reach; then came his letter, in which he wrote that he was coming with a foreign army at his back, to wash away the new faith in blood, and to punish you with death.—I could wait no longer. I showed the letter to the King.

*Malini*

Why did you forget yourself, Supriya? Why did fear overcome you? Have I not room enough in my house for him and his soldiers?

(*Enters KING.*)

*King*

Come to my arms, Supriya; I went at a fit time to surprise Kemankar

and to capture him. An hour later,  
and a thunderbolt would have burst  
upon my house in my sleep. You  
are my friend, Supriya, come—

*Supriya*

God forgive me.

*King*

Do you not know that a King's love  
is not unsubstantial ? I give you  
leave to ask for any reward that comes  
to your mind. Tell me, what do you  
want ?

*Supriya*

Nothing, Sire, nothing. I shall live,  
begging from door to door.

*King*

Only ask me, and you shall have  
provinces worthy to tempt a king.

*Supriya*

They do not tempt me.

*King*

I understand you. I know towards what moon you raise your hands. Mad youth, be brave to ask even that which seems so impossible. Why are you silent? Do you remember the day when you prayed for my Malini's banishment? Will you repeat that prayer to me, to lead my daughter to exile from her father's house?—My daughter, do you know that you owe your life to this noble youth? And is it hard for you to pay off that debt with your——?

*Supriya*

For pity's sake, Sire, no more of this. Worshippers there are many who by lifelong devotion have gained the highest fulfilment of their desire. Could I be counted one of them I should be happy. But to accept it

from the King's hands as the reward of treachery ? Lady mine, you have the plenitude and peace of your greatness ; you know not the secret cravings of a poverty-stricken soul. I dare not ask from you an atom more than that pity of love which you have for every creature in the world.

*Malini*

Father, what is your punishment for the captive ?

*King*

He shall die.

*Malini*

On my knees I beg from you his pardon.

*King*

But he is a rebel, my child.

*Supriya*

Do you judge him, King ? He also judged you, when he came to punish you, not to rob your kingdom.

*Malini*

Spare him his life, father. Then only will you have the right to bestow on him your friendship, who has saved you from a great peril.

*King*

What do you say, Supriya ? Shall I restore a friend to his friend's arms ?

*Supriya*

That will be king-like in its grace.

*King*

It will come in its time, and you will find back your friend. But a

King's generosity must not stop there. I must give you something which exceeds your hope,—yet not as a mere reward. You have won my heart, and my heart is ready to offer you its best treasure.—My child, where was this shyness in you before now ? Your dawn had no tint of rose,—its light was white and dazzling. But to-day a tearful mist of tenderness sweetly tempers it for mortal eyes. (*To SUPRIYA.*) Leave my feet, rise up and come to my heart. Happiness is pressing it like pain. Leave me now for a while. I want to be alone with my Malini. (*SUPRIYA goes.*) I feel I have found back my child once again,—not the bright star of the sky, but the sweet flower that blossoms on earthly soil. She is my daughter, the darling of my heart.

(*Enters ATTENDANT.*)

*Attendant*

The captive, Kemankar, is at the door.

*King*

Bring him in. Here comes he, with his eyes fixed, his proud head held high, a brooding shadow on his forehead, like a thunder-cloud motionless in a suspended storm.

*Malini*

The iron chain is shamed of itself upon those limbs. The insult to greatness is its own insult. He looks like a god defying his captivity.

(Enters KEMANKAR *in chains.*)

*King*

What punishment do you expect from my hands ?

*Kemankar*

Death

*King*

But if I pardon you ?

*Kemankar*

Then I shall have time again to complete the work I began.

*King*

You seem out of love with your life. Tell me your last wish, if you have any.

*Kemankar*

I want to see my friend, Supriya, before I die.

*King*

(To the attendant.) Ask Supriya to come.

*Malini*

There is a power in that face that frightens me. Father, do not let Supriya come.

*King*

Your fear is baseless, child.

(SUPRIYA enters, and walks towards  
KEMANKAR, with arms extended.)

*Kemankar*

No, no, not yet. First let us have our say, and then the greeting of love.  
-- Come closer to me. You know I am poor in words,—and my time is short. My trial is over, but not yours. Tell me, why have you done this ?

*Supriya*

Friend, you will not understand me. I had to keep my faith, even at the cost of my love.

*Kemankar*

I understand you, Supriya. I have seen that girl's face, glowing with an inner light, looking like a

voice becoming visible. You offered, to the fire of those eyes, the faith in your fathers' creed, the faith in your country's good, and built up a new one on the foundation of a treason.

*Supriya*

Friend, you are right. My faith has come to me perfected in the form of that woman. Your sacred books were dumb to me. I have read, by the help of the light of those eyes, the ancient book of creation, and I have known that true faith is there, where there is man, where there is love. It comes from the mother in her devotion, and it goes back to her from her child. It descends in the gift of a giver and it appears in the heart of him who takes it. I accepted the bond of this faith which reveals the infinite in man, when I set my eyes upon that face full of

light and love and peace of hidden wisdom.

*Kemankar*

I also once set my eyes on that face, and for a moment dreamt that religion had come at last, in the form of a woman, to lead man's heart to heaven. For a moment, music broke out from the very ribs of my breast and all my life's hopes blossomed in their fulness. Yet did not I break through these meshes of illusion to wander in foreign lands ? Did not I suffer humiliation from unworthy hands in patience, and bear the pain of separation from you, who have been my friend from my infancy ? And what have you been doing meanwhile ? You sat in the shade of the King's garden, and spent your sweet leisure in idly weaving a lie to condone your infatuation and calling it a religion.

*Supriya*

My friend, is not this world wide enough to hold men whose natures are widely different? Those countless stars of the sky, do they fight for the mastery of the One? Cannot faiths hold their separate lights in peace for the separate worlds of minds that need them?

*Kemankar*

Words, mere words. To let falsehood and truth live side by side in amity, the infinite world is not wide enough. That the corn ripening for the food of man should make room for thorny weeds, love is not so hatefully all-loving. That one should be allowed to sap the sure ground of friendship with betrayal of trust, could tolerance be so traitorously wide as that? That one should die like a

thief to defend his faith and the other live in honour and wealth who betrayed it—no, no, the world is not so stony-hard as to bear without pain such hideous contradictions in its bosom.

*Supriya*

(To MALINI.) All these hurts and insults I accept in your name, my lady. Kemankar, you are paying your life for your faith,—I am paying more. It is your love, dearer than my life.

*Kemankar*

No more of this prating. All truths must be tested in death's court. My friend, do you remember our student days when we used to wrangle the whole night through, to come at last to our teacher, in the morning, to know in a moment which of us was right. Let that morning break now.

Let us go there to that land of the final, and stand before death with all our questions, where the changing mist of doubts will vanish at a breath, and the mountain peaks of eternal truth will appear, and we two fools will look at each other and laugh.— Dear friend, bring before death that which you deem your best and immortal.

*Supriya*

Friend, let it be as you wish.

*Kemankar*

Then come to my heart. You had wandered far from your comrade, in the infinite distance,—now, dear friend, come eternally close to me, and accept from one, who loves you, the gift of death. (*Strikes SUPRIYA with his chains, and SUPRIYA falls.*)

*Kemankar*

(*Embracing the dead body of SUPRIYA.*) Now call your executioner.

*King*

(*Rising up.*) Where is my sword ?

*Malini*

Father, forgive Kemankar !

# **SACRIFICE**

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY  
TO THOSE HEROES WHO  
**BRAVELY STOOD FOR PEACE**  
WHEN HUMAN SACRIFICE  
WAS CLAIMED FOR THE  
**GODDESS OF WAR**

## SACRIFICE

*A temple in Tippera*

*(Enters GUNAVATI, the Queen.)*

*Gunavati*

Have I offended thee, dread Mother? Thou grantest children to the beggar woman, who sells them to live, and to the adulteress, who kills them to save herself from infamy, and here am I, the Queen, with all the world lying at my feet, hankering in vain for the baby-touch at my bosom, to feel the stir of a dearer life within my life. What sin have I committed, Mother, to merit this,—to be banished from the mothers' heaven?

(*Enters RAGHUPATI, the priest.*)

O Master, have I ever been remiss in my worship ? And my husband, is he not godlike in his purity ? Then why has the Goddess, who weaves the web of this world-illusion, assigned my place in the barren waste of childlessness ?

*Raghupati*

Our Mother is all caprice, she knows no law, our sorrows and joys are mere freaks of her mind. Have patience, daughter, to-day we shall offer special sacrifice in your name to please her.

*Gunavati*

Accept my grateful obeisance, father. My offerings are already on their way to the temple,—the red bunches of hibiscus and beasts of sacrifice. [They go out.]

*Enter GOVINDA, the King ; JAISING, the servant of temple ; and APARNA, the beggar girl.*

*Jaising*

What is your wish, Sire ?

*Govinda*

Is it true that this poor girl's pet goat has been brought by force to the temple to be killed ? Will Mother accept such a gift with grace ?

*Jaising*

King, how are we to know from whence the servants collect our daily offerings of worship ? But, my child, why is this weeping ? Is it worthy of you to shed tears for that which Mother herself has taken ?

*Aparna*

Mother ! I am his mother. If I return late to my hut, he refuses his

grass, and bleats, with his eyes on the road. I take him up in my arms, when I come, and share my food with him. He knows no other mother but me.

*Jaising*

Sire, could I make the goat live again, by giving up a portion of my life, gladly would I do it. But how can I restore that which Mother herself has taken ?

*Aparna*

Mother has taken ? It is a lie. Not mother, but demon.

*Jaising*

O, the blasphemy !

*Aparna*

Mother, art thou there to rob a poor girl of her love ? Then where is the throne, before which to condemn thee ? Tell me, King.

*Govinda*

I am silent, my child. I have no answer.

*Aparna*

This blood-streak running down the steps, is it his ? O my darling, when you trembled and cried for dear life, why did your call not reach my heart through the whole deaf world ?

*Jaising*

(*To the image*) I have served thee from my infancy, Mother Kali, yet I understand thee not. Does pity only belong to weak mortals, and not to gods ? Come with me, my child, let me do for you what I can. Help must come from man, when it is denied from gods.

[*Jaising and Aparna go out.*

(Enter RAGHUPATI ; NAKSHATRA, who  
is the King's brother ; and the  
courtiers.)

*All*

Victory be to the King !

*Govinda*

Know you all, that I forbid shedding  
of blood in the temple from to-day  
for ever.

*Minister*

You forbid sacrifice to the Goddess ?

*General Nayan Rai*

Forbid sacrifice ?

*Nakshatra*

How terrible ! Forbid sacrifice ?

*Raghupati*

Is it a dream ?

*Govinda*

No dream, father. It is awakening.  
Mother came to me, in a girl's disguise,  
and told me that blood she cannot  
suffer.

*Raghupati*

She has been drinking blood for  
ages. Whence comes this loathing all  
of a sudden ?

*Govinda*

No, she never drank blood, she kept  
her face averted.

*Raghupati*

I warn you, think and consider.  
You have no power to alter laws laid  
down in scriptures.

*Govinda*

God's words are above all laws.

*Raghupati*

Do not add pride to your folly.  
 Do you have the effrontery to say  
 that *you* alone have heard God's  
 words, and not I ?

*Nakshatra*

It is strange, that the King should  
 have heard from gods and not the  
 priest.

*Govinda*

God's words are ever ringing in the  
 world, and he who is wilfully deaf  
 cannot hear them.

*Raghupati*

Atheist ! Apostate !

*Govinda*

Father, go to your morning service,  
 and declare to all worshippers that

from hence they will be punished with banishment, who shed creatures' blood in their worship of the Mother of all creatures.

*Raghupati*

Is this your last word ?

*Govinda*

Yes.

*Raghupati*

'Then curse upon you ! Do you, in your enormous pride, imagine that the Goddess, dwelling in your land, is your subject ? Do you presume to bind her with your laws and rob her of her dues ? You shall never do it. I declare it,—I who am her servant.

[*Goes.*

*Nayan Rai*

Pardon me, Sire, but have you the right ?

*Minister*

King, is it too late to revoke your order ?

*Govinda*

We dare not delay to uproot sin  
from our realm.

*Minister*

Sin can never have such a long  
lease of life. Could they be sinful,—  
the rites that have grown old at the  
feet of the Goddess ?

[*The King is silent.*

*Nakshatra*

Indeed they could not be.

*Minister*

Our ancestors have performed these  
rites with reverence ; can you have  
the heart to insult them ?

[*The King remains silent.*

*Nayan Rai*

That which has the sanction of ages,  
have you the right to remove it ?

*Govinda*

No more doubts and disputes. Go and spread my order in all my lands.

*Minister*

But, Sire, the Queen has offered her sacrifice for this morning's worship ; it is come near the temple gate.

*Govinda*

Send it back. [He goes.]

*Minister*

What is this ?

*Nakshatra*

Are we, then, to come down to the level of Buddhists, and treat animals as if they have their right to live ? Preposterous !

[They all go out.]

(*Enters RAGHUPATI,—JAISING following him with a jar of water to wash his feet.*)

*Jaising*

Father.

*Raghupati*

Go !

*Jaising*

Here is some water.

*Raghupati*

No need of it !

*Jaising*

Your clothes.

*Raghupati*

Take them away !

*Jaising*

Have I done anything to offend you ?

*Raghupati*

Leave me alone. The shadows of evil have thickened. The King's throne is raising its insolent head above the temple altar. Ye gods of these degenerate days, are ye ready to obey the King's laws with bowed heads, fawning upon him like his courtiers ? Have only men and demons combined to usurp gods' dominions in this world, and is heaven powerless to defend its honour ? But there remain the Brahmins, though the gods be absent ; and the King's throne will supply fuel to the sacrificial fire of their anger. My child, my mind is distracted.

*Jaising*

Whatever has happened, father ?

*Raghupati*

I cannot find words to say. Ask the Mother Goddess who has been defied.

*Jaising*

Defied ? By whom ?

*Raghupati*

By King Govinda.

*Jaising*

King Govinda defied Mother Kali !

*Raghupati*

Defied you and me, all scriptures,  
all countries, all time, defied Mahākāli,  
the Goddess of the endless stream of  
time,—sitting upon that puny little  
throne of his.

*Jaising*

\* King Govinda ?

*Raghupati*

Yes, yes, your King Govinda, the  
darling of your heart. Ungrateful !

I have given all my love to bring you up, and yet King Govinda is dearer to you than I am.

*Jaising*

The child raises its arms to the full moon, sitting upon his father's lap. You are my father, and my full moon is King Govinda. Then is it true, what I hear from people, that our King forbids all sacrifice in the temple ? But in this we cannot obey him.

*Raghupati*

Banishment is for him who does not obey.

*Jaising*

It is no calamity to be banished from a land where Mother's worship remains incomplete. No, so long as I live, the service of the temple shall be fully performed.

[*They go out.*

(Enter GUNAVATI and her attendant.)

*Gunavati*

What is it you say ? The Queen's sacrifice turned away from the temple gate ? Is there a man in this land who carries more than one head on his shoulders, that he could dare think of it ? Who is that doomed creature ?

*Attendant*

I am afraid to name him.

*Gunavati*

Afraid to name him, when I ask you ? Whom do you fear more than me ?

*Attendant*

Pardon me.

*Gunavati*

Only last evening court minstrels came to sing my praise, Brahmins

blessed me, the servants silently took their orders from my mouth. What can have happened, in the meantime, that things have become completely upset,—the Goddess refused her worship, and the Queen her authority. Was Tripura a dreamland ? Give my salutation to the priest, and ask him to come.

[*Attendant goes out.*

(Enters GOVINDA.)

*Gunavati*

Have you heard, King ? My offerings have been sent back from Mother's temple.

*Govinda*

I know it.

*Gunavati*

You know it, and yet bear the insult ?

*Govinda*

I beg to ask your pardon for the culprit.

*Gunavati*

I know, King, your heart is merciful, but this is no mercy. It is feebleness. If your kindness hampers you, leave the punishment in my hand. Only, tell me, who is he ?

*Govinda*

It is I, my Queen. My crime was in nothing else but having given you pain.

*Gunavati*

I do not understand you.

*Govinda*

From to-day shedding of blood in gods' temples is forbidden in my land.

*Gunavati*

Who forbids it ?

*Govinda*

Mother herself.

*Gunavati*

Who heard it ?

*Govinda*

I.

*Gunavati*

You ! That makes me laugh. The Queen of all the world comes to the gate of Tripura's King with her petition.

*Govinda*

Not with her petition, but with her sorrow.

*Gunavati*

Your dominion is outside the temple limit. Do not send your commands there, where they are impertinent.

*Govinda*

The command is not mine, it is  
Mother's.

*Gunavati*

If you have no doubt in your  
decision, do not cross my faith. Let  
me perform my worship according to  
my light.

*Govinda*

I promised my Goddess to prevent  
sacrifice of life in her temple, and I  
must carry it out.

*Gunavati* 4

I also promised my Goddess the  
blood of three hundred kids and one  
hundred buffaloes, and I will carry  
it out. You may leave me now.

*Govinda*

As you wish.

[He goes out.]

(*Enters RAGHUPATI.*)

*Gunavati*

My offerings have been turned back from the temple, father.

*Raghupati*

The worship offered by the most ragged of all beggars is not less precious than yours, Queen. But the misfortune is that Mother has been deprived. The misfortune is that the King's pride is growing into a bloated monster, obstructing divine grace, fixing its angry red eyes upon all worshippers.

*Gunavati*

What will come of all this, father ?

*Raghupati*

That is only known to her, who fashions this world with her dreams.

But this is certain, that the throne, which casts its shadow upon Mother's shrine, will burst like a bubble, vanishing in the void.

*Gunavati*

Have mercy and save us, father.

*Raghupati*

Ha, ha ! I am to save you,—you, the consort of a King who boasts of his kingdom in the earth and in heaven as well, before whom the gods and the Brahmins must,—Oh, shame ! Oh, the evil age, when the Brahmin's futile curse recoils upon himself, to sting him into madness.

[*About to tear his sacrificial thread.*]

*Gunavati*

[*Preventing him.*] Have mercy upon me.

*Raghupati*

Then give back to Brahmins what  
are theirs by right.

*Gunavati*

Yes, I will. Go, master, to your  
worship and nothing will hinder you.

*Raghupati*

Indeed your favour overwhelms me.  
At the merest glance of your eyes  
gods are saved from ignominy and  
the Brahmin is restored to his sacred  
offices. Thrive and grow fat and  
sleek till the dire day of judgment  
comes.

[Goes out.]

(*Re-enters KING GOVINDA.*)

*Govinda*

My Queen, the shadow of your  
angry brows hides all light from my  
heart.

*Gunavati*

Go ! Do not bring a curse upon  
this house.

*Govinda*

Woman's smile removes all curse  
from the house, her love is God's  
grace. .

*Gunavati*

Go, and never show your face to me  
again.

*Govinda*

I shall come back, my Queen, when  
you remember me.

*Gunavati*

[Clinging to the King's feet.] Pardon me, King. Have you become  
so hard that you forget to respect  
woman's pride ? Do you not know,  
beloved, that thwarted love takes the  
disguise of anger ?

*Govinda*

I would die, if I lost my trust in you. I know, my love, that clouds are for moments only, and the sun is for all days.

*Gunavati*

Yes, the clouds will pass by, God's thunder will return to his armoury, and the sun of all days will shine upon the traditions of all time. Yes, my King, order it so, that Brahmins be restored to their rights, the Goddess to her offerings, and the King's authority to its earthly limits.

*Govinda*

✓ It is not the Brahmin's right to violate the eternal good. The creature's blood is not the offering for gods. And it is within the rights of the King and the peasant alike to maintain truth and righteousness.

*Gunavati*

I prostrate myself on the ground before you ; I beg at your feet. The custom, that comes through all ages, is not the King's own. Like heaven's air, it belongs to all men. Yet your Queen begs it of you, with clasped hands, in the name of your people. Can you still remain silent, proud man, refusing entreaties of love in favour of duty which is doubtful ? Then go, go, go from me.

[*They go.*

(Enter RAGHUPATI, JAISING, and  
NAYAN RAI.)

*Raghupati*

General, your devotion to Mother is well known.

*Nayan Rai*

It runs through generations of my ancestors.

*Raghupati*

Let this sacred love give you indomitable courage. Let it make your sword-blade mighty as God's thunder, and win its place above all powers and positions of this world.

*Nayan Rai*

The Brahmin's blessings will never be in vain.

*Raghupati*

Then I bid you collect your soldiers and strike Mother's enemy down to the dust.

*Nayan Rai*

Tell me, father, who is the enemy ?

*Raghupati*

Govinda.

*Nayan Rai*

Our King ?

*Raghupati*

Yes, attack him with all your force.

*Nayan Rai*

It is evil advice. Father, is this to try me ?

*Raghupati*

Yes, it is to try you, to know for certain whose servant you are. Give up all hesitation. Know that the Goddess calls, and all earthly bonds must be severed.

*Nayan Rai*

I have no hesitation in my mind. I stand firm in my post, where my Goddess has placed me.

*Raghupati*

You are brave.

*Nayan Rai*

Am I the basest of Mother's servants, that the order should come for me to turn traitor? She herself stands upon the faith of man's heart. Can she ask me to break it? Then to-day comes to dust the King, and to-morrow the Goddess herself.

*Jaising*

Noble words.

*Raghupati*

The King, who has turned traitor to Mother, has lost all claims to your allegiance.

*Nayan Rai*

Drive me not, father, into a wilderness of debates. I know only one path,—the straight path of faith and truth. This stupid servant of Mother shall never swerve from that highway of honour.

[Goes out.]

*Jaising*

Let us be strong in our faith as he is, Master. Why ask the aid of soldiers ? We have the strength within ourselves for the task given to us from above. Open the temple gate wide, father. Sound the drum. Come, come, O citizens, to worship her, who takes all fear away from our hearts. Come, Mother's children.

[*Citizens come.*

*First Citizen*

Come, come, we are called.

*All*

Victory to Mother !

[*They sing and dance.*

*The dread Mother dances naked in the battlefield,*

*Her lolling tongue burns like a red flame of fire,*

*Her dark tresses fly in the sky, sweeping  
away the sun and stars,  
Red streams of blood run from her  
cloud-black limbs,  
And the world trembles and cracks  
under her tread.*

*Jaising*

Do you see the beasts of sacrifice  
coming towards the temple, driven  
by the Queen's attendants ?

(*They cry.*)

Victory to Mother ! Victory to our  
Queen !

*Raghupati*

Jaising, make haste and get ready  
for the worship.

*Jaising*

Everything is ready, father.

*Raghupati*

Send a man to call Prince Nakshatra in my name.

[JAISING goes. *Citizens sing and dance.*

*Govinda*

Silence, Raghupati ! Do you dare to disregard my order ?

*Raghupati*

Yes, I do.

*Govinda*

Then you are not for my land.

*Raghupati*

No, my land is there, where the King's crown kisses the dust. No ! Citizens ! Let Mother's offerings be brought in here.

[*They beat drums.*

*Govinda*

Silence ! (*To his attendants.*) Ask my General to come. Raghupati, you drive me to call soldiers to defend God's right. I feel the shame of it ; for the force of arms only reveals man's weakness.

*Raghupati*

Sceptic, are you so certain in your mind that Brahmins have lost the ancient fire of their sacred wrath ? No, its flame will burst out from my heart to burn your throne into ashes. If it does not, then I shall throw into the fire the scriptures, and my Brahmin pride, and all the arrant lies that fill our temple shrines in the guise of the divine.

(Enter GENERAL NAYAN RAI and CHANDPAL, who is the second in command of the army.)

*Govinda*

Stand here with your soldiers to prevent sacrifice of life in the temple.

*Nayan*

Pardon me, Sire. The King's servant is powerless in the temple of God.

*Govinda*

General, it is not for you to question my order. You are to carry out my words. Their merits and demerits belong only to me.

*Nayan*

I am your servant, my King, but I am a man above all. I have reason and my religion. I have my King,— and also my God.

*Govinda*

Then surrender your sword to Chandpal. He will protect the temple from pollution of blood.

*Nayan Rai*

Why to Chandpal ? This sword was given to my forefathers by your royal ancestors. If you want it back, I will give it up to you. Be witness, my fathers, who are in the heroes' paradise,—the sword, that you made sacred with your loyal faith and bravery, I surrender to my King.

[Goes out.]

*Raghupati*

The Brahmin's curse has begun its work already.

(Enters JAISING.)

*Jaising*

The beasts have been made ready for the sacrifice.

*Govinda*

Sacrifice ?

*Jaising*

King, listen to my earnest entreaties. Do not stand in the way, hiding the Goddess, man as you are.

*Raghupati*

Shame, Jaising. Rise up and ask my pardon. I am your Master. Your place is at my feet, not the King's. Fool ! Do you ask King's sanction to "do God's service ? Leave alone the worship and the sacrifice. Let us wait and see how his pride prevails in the end. Come away.

[*They go out.*

(*Enters APARNA.*)

*Aparna*

Where is Jaising ? He is not here, but only you,—the image whom nothing can move. You rob us of all our best without uttering a word.

We pine for love, and die beggars  
for want of it. Yet it comes to you  
unasked, though you need it not.  
Like a grave, you hoard it under your  
miserly stone, keeping it from the  
use of the yearning world.] Jaising,  
what happiness do you find from her ?  
What can she speak to you ? O my  
heart, my famished heart !

(*Enters RAGHUPATI.*)

*Raghupati*

Who are you ?

*Aparna*

I am a beggar girl. Where is  
Jaising ?

*Raghupati*

Leave this place at once. I know  
you are haunting this temple, to steal  
Jaising's heart from the Goddess.

*Aparna*

Has the Goddess anything to fear  
from me ? I fear her.

[*She goes out.*

(*Enter JAISING and PRINCE  
NAKSHATRA.*)

*Nakshatra*

Why have you called me ?

*Raghupati*

Last night the Goddess told me in  
a dream, that you shall become king  
within a week.

*Nakshatra*

Ha, ha, this is news indeed.

*Raghupati*

Yes, you shall be king.

*Nakshatra*

I cannot believe it.

*Raghupati*

You doubt my words ?

*Nakshatra*

I do not want to doubt them. But suppose, by chance, it never comes to pass.

*Raghupati*

No, it shall be true.

*Nakshatra*

But, tell me, how can it ever become true ?

*Raghupati*

The Goddess thirsts for King's blood.

*Nakshatra*

King's blood ?

*Raghupati*

You must offer it to her before you can be king.

*Nakshatra*

I know not where to get it.

*Raghupati*

There is King Govinda.—Jaising, keep still.—Do you understand ? Kill him in secret. Bring his blood, while warm, to the altar.—Jaising, leave this place if you cannot remain still,—

*Nakshatra*

But he is my brother, and I love him.

*Raghupati*

Your sacrifice will be all the more precious.

*Nakshatra*

But, father, I am content to remain as I am. I do not want the kingdom.

*Raghupati*

There is no escape for you, because the Goddess commands it. She is thirsting for blood from the King's house. If your brother is to live, then you must die.

*Nakshatra*

Have pity on me, father.

*Raghupati*

You shall never be free in life, or in death, until her bidding is done.

*Nakshatra*

Advise me, then, how to do it.

*Raghupati*

Wait in silence. I will tell you what to do when the time comes. And now, go.

[NAKSHATRA goes.

*Jaising*

What is it that I heard ? Merciful Mother, is it your bidding ? To ask brother to kill brother ? Master, how could you say that it was Mother's own wish ?

*Raghupati*

There was no other means but this  
to serve my Goddess.

*Jaising*

Means ? Why means ? Mother, have you not your own sword to wield with your own hand ? Must your wish burrow underground, like a thief, to steal in secret ? Oh, the sin !

*Raghupati*

What do you know about sin ?

*Jaising*

What I have learnt from you.

*Raghupati*

Then come and learn your lesson once again from me. Sin has no meaning in reality. To kill is but to kill,—it is neither sin nor anything else. Do you not know that the dust of this earth is made of countless killings ? Old Time is ever writing the chronicle of the transient life of creatures in letters of blood. Killing is in the wilderness, in the habitations of man, in birds' nests, in insects' holes, in the sea, in the sky ; there is killing for life, for sport, for nothing whatever. The world is ceaselessly killing ; and the great Goddess Kali, the spirit of ever-changing time, is standing with her thirsty tongue hanging down from her mouth, with her cup in hand, into which is running the red life-blood of the world, like juice from the crushed cluster of grapes.

*Jaising*

Stop, Master. Is, then, love a falsehood and mercy a mockery, and the one thing true, from beginning of time, the lust for destruction? Would it not have destroyed itself long ago? You are playing with my heart, my master. Look there, she is gazing at me with her sweet mocking smile. My bloodthirsty Mother, wilt thou accept my blood? Shall I plunge this knife into my breast and make an end to my life, as thy child, for evermore? The life-blood, flowing in these veins, is it so delicious to thee? O my Mother, my bloodthirsty Mother.—Master, did you call me? I know you wanted my heart to break its bounds in pain overflowing my Mother's feet. This is the true sacrifice. But King's blood! The Mother, who is thirsting for our love, you accuse of bloodthirstiness!

*Raghupati*

Then let the sacrifice be stopped in the temple.

*Jaising*

Yes, let it be stopped.—No, no, Master, you know what is right and what is wrong. The heart's laws are not the laws of scripture. Eyes cannot see with their own light,—the light must come from the outside. Pardon me, Master, pardon my ignorance. Tell me, father, is it true that the Goddess seeks King's blood ?

*Raghupati*

Alas, child, have you lost your faith in me ?

*Jaising*

My world stands upon my faith in you. If the Goddess must have King's blood, let me bring it to her. I will

never allow a brother to kill his brother.

*Raghupati*

But there can be no evil in carrying out God's wishes.

*Jaising*

No, it must be good, and I will earn the merit of it.

*Raghupati*

But, my boy, I have reared you from your childhood, and you have grown close to my heart. I can never bear to lose you, by any chance.

*Jaising*

I will not let your love for me be soiled with sin. Release Prince Nakshatra from his promise.

*Raghupati*

I shall think, and decide to-morrow.

[*He goes.*

*Jaising*

Deeds are better, however cruel they may be, than the hell of thinking and doubting. You are right, my master ; truth is in your words. To kill is no sin, to kill brother is no sin, to kill king is no sin.—Where do you go, my brothers ? To the fair at Nishipur ? There the women are to dance ? Oh, this world is pleasant ! And the dancing limbs of the girls are beautiful. In what careless merriment the crowds flew through the roads, making the sky ring with their laughter and song. I will follow them.

(Enters RAGHUPATI.)

*Raghupati*

Jaising.

*Jaising*

I do not know you. I drift with the crowd. Why ask me to stop ? Go your own way.

*Chandpal*

I have overheard a conspiracy to take away your life.

*Govinda*

Who wants my life ?

*Chandpal*

I am afraid to tell you, lest the news become to you more deadly than the knife itself. It was Prince Nakshatra, who—

*Govinda*

Nakshatra ?

*Chandpal*

He has promised to Raghupati to bring your blood to the Goddess.

*Govinda*

To the Goddess ? Then I cannot blame him. For a man loses his humanity when it concerns his gods. You go to your work and leave me alone.

[CHANDPAL goes out.]

(Addressing the image.) Accept these flowers, Goddess, and let your creatures live in peace. Mother, those who are weak in this world are so helpless, and those who are strong are so cruel. Greed is pitiless, ignorance blind, and pride takes no heed when it crushes the small under its foot. Mother, do not raise your sword and lick your lips for blood ; do not set brother against brother, and woman against man. If it is your desire to strike me by the hand of one I love, then let it be fulfilled. For the sin has to ripen to its ugliest limits before it

can burst and die a hideous death ;  
and when King's blood is shed by a  
brother's hand, then lust for blood  
will disclose its demon face, leaving  
its disguise as a goddess. If such be  
your wish I bow my head to it.

[JAISING rushes in.

*Jaising*

Tell me, Goddess, dost thou truly  
want King's blood ? Ask it in thine  
own voice, and thou shalt have it.

*A voice*

I want King's blood.

*Jaising*

King, say your last prayer, for your  
time has come.

*Govinda*

What makes you say it, Jaising ?

*Jaising*

Did you not hear what the Goddess said ?

*Govinda*

It was not the Goddess. I heard the familiar voice of Raghupati.

*Jaising*

The voice of Raghupati ? No, no ! Drive me not from doubt to doubt. It is all the same, whether the voice comes from the Goddess, or from my master.—

*[He unsheathes his knife, and then throws it away.]*

Listen to the cry of thy children, Mother. Let there be only flowers, the beautiful flowers for thy offerings,—no more blood. They are red even as blood,—these bunches of hibiscus. They have come out of the heart-burst of the earth, pained at the

slaughter of her children. Accept this. Thou must accept this. I defy thy anger. Blood thou shalt never have. Redden thine eyes. Raise thy sword. Bring thy furies of destruction. I do not fear thee.—King, leave this temple to its Goddess, and go to your men.

[GOVINDA goes.]

Alas, alas, in a moment I gave up all that I had, my master, my Goddess.

[RAGHUPATI comes.]

*Raghupati*

I have heard all. Traitor, you have betrayed your master.

*Jaising*

Punish me, father.

*Raghupati*

What punishment will you have ?

*Jaising*

Punish me with my life.

*Raghupati*

No, that is nothing. Take your oath touching the feet of the Goddess.

*Jaising*

I touch her feet.

*Raghupati*

Say, I will bring kingly blood to the altar of the Goddess, before it is midnight.

*Jaising*

I will bring kingly blood to the altar of the Goddess, before it is midnight.

[*They go out.*

(*Enters GUNAVATI.*)

*Gunavati*

I failed. I had hoped that, if I remained hard and cold for some days, he would surrender. Such faith I

had in my power, vain woman that I am. I showed my sullen anger, and remained away from him ; but it was fruitless. ( Woman's anger is like a diamond's glitter ; it only shines, but cannot burn. I would it were like thunder, bursting upon the King's house, startling him up from his sleep, and dashing his pride to the ground. )

*(Enters the boy DRUVA.)*

*Gunavati*

Where are you going ?

*Druva*

I am called by the King.

[Goes out.]

*Gunavati*

There goes the darling of the King's heart. He has robbed my unborn

children of their father's love, usurped their right to the first place in the King's breast. O Mother Kali, your creation is infinite and full of wonders, only send a child to my arms in merest whim, a tiny little warm living flesh to fill my lap, and I shall offer you whatever you wish. (*Enters NAKSHATRA.*) Prince Nakshatra, why do you turn back ? I am a mere woman, weak and without weapon, am I so fearful ?

*Nakshatra*

No, do not call me.

*Gunavati*

Why ? What harm is in that ?

*Nakshatra*

I do not want to be a king.

*Gunavati*

But why are you so excited ?

*Nakshatra*

May the King live long, and may I die as I am,—a prince.

*Gunavati*

Die as quick as you can ; have I ever said anything against it ?

*Nakshatra*

Then tell me what you want of me.

*Gunavati*

The thief that steals the crown is awaiting you,—remove him. Do you understand ?

*Nakshatra*

Yes, except who the thief is.

*Gunavati*

That boy, Druva. Do you not see how he is growing in the King's lap, till one day he reaches the crown ?

*Nakshatra*

Yes, I have often thought of it.  
I have seen my brother putting his  
crown on the boy's head in play.

*Gunavati*

Playing with the crown is a dangerous  
game. If you do not remove the  
player, he will make a game of you.

*Nakshatra*

Yes, I like it not.

*Gunavati*

Offer him to Kali. Have you not  
heard that Mother is thirsting for  
blood?

*Nakshatra*

But, sister, this is not my business.

*Gunavati*

Fool, can you feel yourself safe, so  
long as Mother is not appeased?

Blood she must have ; save your own,  
if you can.

*Nakshatra*

But she wants King's blood.

*Gunavati*

Who told you that ?

*Nakshatra*

I know it from one, to whom the  
Goddess herself sends her dreams.

*Gunavati*

Then that boy must die for the  
King. His blood is more precious to  
your brother than his own, and the  
King can only be saved by paying  
the price, which is more than his life.

*Nakshatra*

I understand.

*Gunavati*

Then lose no time. Run after him.  
He is not gone far. But remember.  
Offer him in my name.

*Nakshatra*

Yes, I will.

*Gunavati*

The Queen's offerings have been  
turned back from Mother's gate. Pray  
to her that she may forgive me.

[They go out.]

(Enters JAISING.)

*Jaising*

Goddess, is there any little thing,  
that yet remains, out of the wreck of  
thee? If there be but a faintest  
spark of thy light in the remotest of  
the stars of evening, answer my cry,  
though thy voice be the feeblest. Say

to me, "Child, here I am."—No, she is nowhere. She is naught. But take pity upon Jaising, O Illusion, and for him become true. Art thou so irredeemably false, that not even my love can send the slightest tremor of life through thy nothingness ? O fool, for whom have you upturned your cup of life, emptying it to the last drop ?—for this unanswering void,— truthless, merciless, and motherless ?

(*Enters APARNA.*)

Aparna, they drive you away from the temple ; yet you come back over and over again. For you are true, and truth cannot be banished. We enshrine falsehood in our temple, with all devotion ; yet she is never there. Leave me not, Aparna. Sit here by my side. Why are you so sad, my darling ? Do you miss some god, who is god no longer ? But is

there any need of God in this little world of ours ? Let us be fearlessly godless and come closer to each other. They want our blood. And for this they have come down to the dust of our earth, leaving their magnificence of heaven. For in their heaven there are no men, no creatures, who can suffer. No, my girl, there is no Goddess.

*Aparna*

Then leave this temple, and come away with me.

*Jaising*

Leave this temple ? Yes, I will leave. Alas, Aparna, I must leave. Yet I cannot leave it, before I have paid my last dues to the—— But let that be. Come closer to me, my love. Whisper something to my ears, which will overflow this life with sweetness, flooding death itself.

*Aparna*

Words do not flow, when the heart  
is full.

*Jaising*

Then lean your head on my breast.  
Let the silence of two eternities, life  
and death, touch each other. But no  
more of this. I must go.

*Aparna*

Jaising, do not be cruel. Can you  
not feel what I have suffered ?

*Jaising*

Am I cruel ? Is this your last word  
to me ? Cruel, as that block of stone,  
whom I called Goddess ? Aparna,  
my beloved, if you were the Goddess,  
you would know what fire is this that  
burns my heart. But you *are* my  
Goddess. Do you know how I know  
it ?

*Aparna*

Tell me.

*Jaising*

You bring to me your sacrifice every moment, as a mother does to her child. God must be all sacrifice, pouring out his life in all creation.

*Aparna*

Jaising, come, let us leave this temple and go away together.

*Jaising*

Save me, Aparna, have mercy upon me and leave me. I have only one object in my life. Do not usurp its place.

[*Rushes out.*

*Aparna*

Again and again I have suffered. But my strength is gone. My heart breaks.

[*She goes out.*

(Enter RAGHUPATI and PRINCE NAKSHATRA.)

*Raghupati*

Prince, where have you kept the boy ?

*Nakshatra*

He is in the room, where the vessels for worship are kept. He has cried himself to sleep. I think I shall never be able to bear it, when he wakes up again.

*Raghupati*

Jaising was of the same age when he came to me. And I remember how he cried till he slept at the feet of the Goddess,—the temple lamp dimly shining on his tear-stained child-face. It was a stormy evening like this.

*Nakshatra*

Father, delay not. I wish to finish it all, while he is sleeping. His cry pierces my heart like a knife.

*Raghunati*

I will drug him to sleep, if he wakes up.

*Nakshatra*

The King will soon find it out, if you are not quick. For, in the evening, he leaves the care of his kingdom to come to this boy.

*Raghupati*

Have more faith in the Goddess. The victim is now in her own hands and it shall never escape.

*Nakshatra*

But Chandpal is so watchful.

*Raghupati*

Not more so than our Mother.

*Nakshatra*

I thought I saw a shadow pass by.

*Raghupati*

The shadow of your own fear.

*Nakshatra*

Do we not hear the sound of a cry ?

*Raghupati*

The sound of your own heart.  
 Shake off your despondency, Prince.  
 Let us drink this wine duly consecrated. So long as the purpose re-  
 mains in the mind, it looms large and  
 fearful. In action it becomes small.  
 The vapour is dark and diffused. It  
 dissolves into water drops, that are  
 small and sparkling. Prince, it is  
 nothing. It takes only a moment,—  
 not more than it does to snuff a candle.  
 That life's light will die in a flash,  
 like lightning in the stormy night of  
 July, leaving its thunderbolt for ever  
 deep in the King's pride. But, Prince,  
 why are you so silent ?

*Nakshatra*

I think we should not be too rash.  
Leave this work till to-morrow night.

*Raghupati*

To-night is as good as to-morrow  
night, perhaps better.

*Nakshatra*

Listen to the sound of footsteps.

*Raghupati*

I do not hear it.

*Nakshatra*

See there,—the light.

*Raghupati*

The King comes. I fear we have  
delayed too long.

(KING comes with attendants.)

*Govinda*

Make them prisoners. (*To RAGHUPATI*) Have you anything to say ?

*Raghupati*

Nothing.

*Govinda*

Do you admit your crime !

*Raghupati*

Crime ? Yes, my crime was that, in my weakness, I delayed in carrying out Mother's service. The punishment comes from the Goddess. You are merely her instrument.

*Govinda*

According to my law, my soldiers shall escort you to exile, Raghupati, where you shall spend eight years of your life.

*Raghupati*

King, I never bent my knees to any mortal in my life. I am a Brahmin. Your caste is lower than mine. Yet, in all humility, I pray to you, give me only one day's time.

*Govinda*

I grant it.

*Raghupati*

(Mockingly.) You are the King of all kings. Your majesty and mercy are alike immeasurable. Whereas I am a mere worm, hiding in the dust.

[He goes out.]

*Govinda*

Nakshatra, admit your guilt.

*Nakshatra*

I am guilty, Sire, and I dare not ask for your pardon.

*Govinda*

Prince, I know you are tender of heart. Tell me, who beguiled you with evil counsel ?

*Nakshatra*

I will not take other names, King. My guilt is my own. You have pardoned your foolish brother more than once, and once more he begs to be pardoned.

*Govinda*

Nakshatra, leave my feet. The judge is still more bound by his laws than his prisoner.

*Attendants*

Sire, remember that he is your brother, and pardon him.

*Govinda*

Let me remember that I am a king. Nakshatra shall remain in exile for

eight years, in the house we have built, by the sacred river, outside the limits of Tripura. [*Taking NAKSHATRA's hands.*] The punishment is not yours only, brother, but also mine,—the more so because I cannot share it bodily. The vacancy that you leave in the palace will prick my heart, every day, with a thousand needles. May the gods be more friendly to you, while you are away from us.

[*They all go out.*

(Enter RAGHUPATI and JAISING.)

### *Raghupati*

My pride wallows in the mire. I have shamed my Brahminhood. I am no longer your master, my child. Yesterday I had the authority to command you. To-day I can only beg your favour. That light is extinct in me, which gave me the right

to defy King's power. The earthen lamp can be replenished and lighted again and again, but the star once extinguished is lost for ever. I am that lost star. Life's days are mere tinsel, most trifling of God's gifts, and I had to beg for one of those days from the King with bent knees. Let that one day be not in vain. Let its infamous black brows be red with King's blood before it dies. Why do you not speak, my boy ? Though I forsake my place as your master, yet have I not the right to claim your obedience as your father,—I who am more than a father to you, because father to an orphan ? But that man is the most miserable of all beggars, who has to beg for love. You are still silent, my child ? Then let my knees bend to you, who were smaller than my knees when you first came to my arms.

*Jaising*

Father, do not torture the heart  
that is already broken. If the Goddess  
thirsts for kingly blood, I will  
bring it to her before to-night. I will  
pay all my debts, yes, every farthing.  
Keep ready for my return. I will  
delay not.

[*Goes out.*]

[*Storm outside.*]

*Raghupati*

She is awake at last, the Terrible.  
Her curses go shrieking through the  
town. The hungry furies are shaking  
the cracking branches of the world-  
tree with all their might, for the stars  
to break and drop. My Mother, why  
didst thou keep thine own people in  
doubt and dishonour so long ? Leave  
it not for thy servant to raise thy  
sword. Let thy mighty arm do its  
own work !—I hear steps.

(*Enters APARNA.*)

*Aparna*

Where is Jaising ?

*Raghupati*

Away, evil omen. (APARNA goes out.) But if Jaising never comes back ? No, he will not break his promise. Victory to thee, Great Kali, the giver of all success !—But if he meet with obstruction ? If he be caught and lose his life at the guards' hands ?—Victory to thee, watchful Goddess, Mother invincible ! Do not allow thy repute to be lost, and thine enemies to laugh at thee. If thy children must lose their pride and faith in their Mother, and bow down their heads in shame before the rebels, who then will remain in this orphaned world to carry thy banner ?—I hear his steps. But so soon ? Is he com-

ing back foiled in his purpose ? No, that cannot be. Thy miracle needs not time, O Mistress of all time, terrible with thy necklace of human skulls.

[JAISING rushes in.]

Jaising, where is the blood ?

*Jaising*

It is with me. Let go my hands, Let me offer it myself (*entering the temple*). Must thou have kingly blood, Great Mother, who nourishest the world at thy breast with life ?—I am of the royal caste, a Kshatriya. My ancestors have sat upon thrones, and there are rulers of men in my mother's line. I have kingly blood in my veins. Take it, and quench thy thirst for ever.

[*Stabs himself, and falls.*]

*Raghupati*

Jaising ! O cruel, ungrateful ! You have done the blackest crime. You

kill your father!—Jaising, forgive me, my darling. Come back to my heart, my heart's one treasure! Let me die in your place.

(*Enters APARNA.*)

*Aparna*

It will madden me. Where is Jaising? Where is he?

*Raghupati*

Come, Aparna, come, my child, call him with all your love. Call him back to life. Take him to you, away from me, only let him live.

[APARNA enters the temple and swoons. (*Beating his forehead on the temple floor.*) Give him, give him, give him! —Give him back to me! (*Stands up addressing the image.*) Look how she stands there, the silly stone,—deaf, dumb, blind,—the whole sorrow-

ing world weeping at her door,—the noblest hearts wrecking themselves at her stony feet. Give me back my Jaising. Oh, it is all in vain. Our bitterest cries wander in emptiness—  
the emptiness that we vainly try to fill with these stony images of delusion.  
 Away with them ! Away with these our impotent dreams, that harden into stones, burdening our world !

[*He throws away the image, and comes out into the courtyard.*

(Enters GUNAVATI.)

*Gunavati*

Victory to thee, great Goddess !—  
 But, where is the Goddess ?

*Raghupati*

Goddess there is none.

*Gunavati*

Bring her back, father. I have brought her my offerings. I have

come at last, to appease her anger  
with my own heart's blood. Let her  
know that the Queen is true to her  
promise. Have pity on me, and bring  
back the Goddess only for this night.  
Tell me,—where is she ?

*Raghupati*

She is nowhere,—neither above, nor  
below.

*Gunavati*

Master, was not the Goddess here  
in the temple ?

*Raghupati*

Goddess ?—If there were any true  
Goddess anywhere in the world, could  
she bear this thing to usurp her name ?

*Gunavati*

Do not torture me. Tell me truly.  
Is there no Goddess ?

*Raghupati*

No, there is none.

*Gunavati*

Then who was here ?

*Raghupati*

Nothing, nothing.

[APARNA comes out from the temple.

*Aparna*

Father !

*Raghupati*

My sweet child ! "Father,"—did you say ? Do you rebuke me with that name ? My son, whom I have killed, has left that one dear call behind him in your sweet voice.

*Aparna*

Father, leave this temple. Let us go away from here.

(*Enters the KING.*)

*Govinda* ~

Where is the Goddess ?

*Raghupati*

The Goddess is nowhere.

*Govinda*

But what blood-stream is this ?

*Raghupati*

King, Jaising, who loved you so  
dearly, has killed himself.

*Govinda*

Killed himself ? Why ?

*Raghupati*

To kill the falsehood, that sucks the  
life-blood of man

*Govinda*

Jaising is great. He has conquered death. My flowers are for him.

*Gunavati*

My King.

*Govinda*

Yes, my love.

*Gunavati*

The Goddess is no more.

*Govinda*

She has burst her cruel prison of stone, and come back to the woman's heart.

*Aparna*

Father, come away.

*Raghupati*

Come, child. Come, Mother. I have found thee. Thou art the last gift of Jaising.



**THE KING AND THE  
QUEEN**

TO  
MRS. ARTHUR SEYMOUR

FWD

# THE KING AND THE QUEEN

## ACT I

*The Palace Garden.* KING VIKRAM  
and QUEEN SUMITRA.

*Vikram*

Why have you delayed in coming  
to me for so long, my love ?

*Sumitra*

Do you not know, my King, that  
I am utterly yours, wherever I am ?  
It was your house, and its service,  
that kept me away from your presence,  
but not from you.)

*Vikram*

Leave the house, and its service,  
alone. My heart cannot spare you

for my world, I am jealous of its claims.

*Sumitra*

No, King, I have my place in your heart, as your beloved, and in your world, as your Queen.

*Vikram*

Alas, my darling, where have vanished those days of unalloyed joy, when we first met in love; when our world awoke not,—only the flush of the early dawn of our union broke through our hearts in overflowing silence? ( You had sweet shyness in your eyelids, like a dew-drop on the tip of a flower-petal, and the smile flickered on your lips like a timid evening lamp in the breeze.) I remember the eager embrace of your love, when the morning broke and we had to part, and your unwilling steps, heavy with languor, that took you

away from me. Where were the house, and its service, and the cares of your world ?

*Sumitra*

But then we were scarcely more than a boy and a girl ; and to-day we are the King and the Queen.

*Vikram*

The King and the Queen ? Mere names. We are more than that ; we are lovers.

*Sumitra*

You are my King, my husband, and I am content to follow your steps. Do not shame me by putting me before your kingship.

.

*Vikram*

Do you not want my love ?

*Sumitra*

Love me truly by not making your love extravagant ; for truth can afford to be simple.

*Vikram*

I do not understand woman's heart.

*Sumitra*

King, if you thriftlessly squander your all upon me, then I shall be deprived.

*Vikram*

No more vain words, Queen. The birds' nests are silent with love. (Let lips keep guard upon lips, and allow not words to clamour)  
make bird noise

(Enters ATTENDANT.)

*Attendant*

The minister begs audience, to discuss a grave matter of state.

*Vikram*

No, not now. [ATTENDANT goes.

*Sumitra*

Sire, ask him to come.

*Vikram*

The state and its matter can wait.  
But sweet leisure comes rarely. It is  
frail, like a flower. Respite from duty  
is a part of duty.

*Sumitra*

Sire, I beg of you, attend to your  
work.

*Vikram*

Again, cruel woman. Do you  
imagine that I always follow you to  
win your unwilling favour, drop by  
drop ? I leave you and go.

{*He goes.*

(Enter DEVADATTA, the King's  
Brahmin friend.)

*Sumitra*

Tell me, sir, what is that noise outside the gate ?

*Devadatta*

That noise ? Command me, and with the help of soldiers I shall drive away that noise, ragged and hungry.

*Sumitra*

Do not mock me. Tell me what has happened.

*Devadatta*

Nothing. It is merely hunger,—the vulgar hunger of poverty. The famished horde of barbarians is rudely clamouring, making the drowsy cuckoos in your royal garden start up in fear.

*Sumitra*

Tell me, father, who are hungry ? 

*Devadatta*

It is their ill-fate. The King's poor subjects have been practising long to live upon half a meal a day, but they have not yet become experts in complete starvation. It is amazing.

*Sumitra*

But, father, the land is smiling with ripe corn. Why should the King's subjects die of hunger ?

*Devadatta*

The corn is his, whose is the land,— it is not for the poor. They, like intruding dogs at the King's feast, crouch in the corner for their crumbs, or kicks.

*Sumitra*

Does it mean that there is no King in this land ?

*Devadatta*

Not one, but hundreds.

*Sumitra*

Are not the King's officers watchful ?

*Devadatta*

Who can blame your officers ? They came penniless from the alien land. Is it to bless the King's subjects with their empty hands ?

*Sumitra*

From the alien land ? Are they my relatives ?

*Devadatta*

Yes, Queen.

*Sumitra*

What about Jaisen ?

*Devadatta*

He rules the province of Singarh with such scrupulous care that all the rubbish, in the shape of food and raiment, has been cleared away ; only the skin and bones remain.

*Sumitra*

And Shila ?

*Devadatta*

He keeps his eyes upon the trade ; he relieves all merchants of their excessive profits, taking the burden upon his own broad shoulders.

*Sumitra*

And Ajit ?

*Devadatta*

He lives in Vijaykote. He smiles sweetly, strokes the land on its back with his caressing hand, and whatever comes to his touch gathers with ease.

*Sumitra*

What shame is this! I must remove this refuse from my father's land and save my people. Leave me now, the King comes. (*Enters the KING.*) I am the mother of my people. I cannot bear their cry. Save them, King.

*Vikram*

What do you want me to do ?

*Sumitra*

Turn those out from your kingdom who are oppressing the land.

*Vikram*

Do you know who they are ?

*Sumitra*

Yes, I know.

*Vikram*

They are your own cousins.

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*Sumitra*

They are not a whit more my own than my people. They are robbers, who, under the cover of your throne, seek for their victims.

*Vikram*

They are Jaisen, Shila, Ajit.

*Sumitra*

My country must be rid of them.

*Vikram*

They will not move without fight.

*Sumitra*

Then fight them, Sire.

*Vikram*

Fight ? But let me conquer *you* first, and then I shall have time to conquer my enemies.

*Sumitra*

Allow me, King, as your Queen. I will save your subjects myself.

[Goes.]

*Vikram*

This is how you make my heart distraught. You sit alone upon your peak of greatness, where I do not reach you. You go to attend your own God, and I go seeking you in vain.

(Enters DEVADATTA.)

*Devadatta*

Where is the Queen, Sire ? Why are you alone ?

*Vikram*

Brahmin, this is all your conspiracy. You come here to talk of the state news to the Queen ?

*Devadatta*

The state is shouting its own news  
loud enough to reach the Queen's ears.  
It has come to that pass, when it  
takes no heed lest your rest be broken.  
Do not be afraid of me, King. I have  
come to ask my Brahmin's dues from  
the Queen. For my wife is out of  
humour, her larder is empty, and in  
the house there are a number of empty  
stomachs.

[*He goes.*

*Vikram*

I wish all happiness to my people.  
Why should there be suffering and  
injustice ? Why should the strong  
cast his vulture's eyes upon the  
poor man's comforts, pitifully small ?  
(*Enters MINISTER.*) Banish all the  
foreign robbers from my kingdom  
this moment. I must not hear the  
cry of the oppressed for a day longer.

*Minister*

But, King, the evil that has been slowly growing for long, you cannot uproot in a day.

*Vikram*

Strike at its root with vigour, and fell it with your axe in a day,—the tree that has taken a hundred years to grow.

*Minister*

But we want arms and soldiers.

*Vikram*

Where is my general ?

*Minister*

He himself is a foreigner.

*Vikram*

Then invite the hungry people.  
Open my treasure ; stop this cry with

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food ; send them away with money,—  
And if they want to have my king-  
dom, let them do so in peace, and be  
happy.

[*He goes.*]

(*Enter SUMITRA and DEVADATTA.*)

*Minister*

Queen, my humble salutation to  
you.

*Queen*

We cannot allow misery to go un-  
checked in our land.

*Minister*

What are your commands, Queen ?

*Queen*

Call immediately, in my name, all  
our chiefs who are foreigners.

*Minister*

I have done so already. I have  
taken upon myself to invite them

into the capital, in the King's name, without asking for his sanction, for fear of refusal.

*Queen*

When did you send your messengers?

*Minister*

It will soon be a month hence. I am expecting their answers every moment. But I am afraid they will not ~~respond~~.

*Queen*

Not respond to the King's call ?

*Devadatta*

The King has become a piece of wild rumour, which they can believe, or not, as they like.

*Queen*

Keep your soldiers ready, Minister, for these people. They shall have to answer to me, as my relatives.

[*The MINISTER goes.*

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*Devadatta*

Queen, they will not come.

*Queen*

Then the King shall fight them.

*Devadatta*

The King will not fight.

*Queen*

Then I will.

*Devadatta*

You !

*Queen*

I will go to my brother Kumarsen,  
Kashmir's King, and with his help  
fight these rebels, who are a disgrace  
to Kashmir. Father, help me to  
escape from this kingdom, and do your  
duty, if things come to the worst.

*Devadatta*

I salute thee, Mother of the people.

[He goes.]

(Enters VIKRAM.)

*Vikram*

Why do you go away, Queen ? My hungry desire is revealed to you in its naked poverty. Do you therefore go away from me in derision ?

*Sumitra*

I feel shamed to share alone your heart, which is for all men.

*Vikram*

Is it absolutely true, Queen, that you stand on your giddy height, and I grovel in the dust ? No. I know my power. There is an unconquerable force in my nature, which I have turned into love for you.

*Sumitra*

Hate me, King, hate me. Forget me. I shall bear it bravely,—but do

not wreck your manhood against a woman's charms.

*Vikram*

So much love, yet such neglect ?  
Your very indifference, like a cruel knife, cuts into my bosom, laying bare the warm bleeding love,—and then, to fling it into the dust !

*Sumitra*

I throw myself at your feet, my beloved. Have you not forgiven your Queen, again and again, for wrongs done ? Then why is this wrath, Sire, when I am blameless ?

*King*

Rise up, my love. Come to my heart. Shut my life from all else for a moment, with your encircling arms, rounding it into a world completely your own.

*A voice from outside*

Queen.

*Sumitra*

It is Devadatta.—Yes, father, what  
is the message ?

(Enters DEVADATTA.)

*Devadatta*

They have defied the King's call,—  
the foreign governors of the provinces,  
—and they are preparing for rebellion.

*Sumitra*

Do you hear, King ?

*Vikram*

Brahmin, the palace garden is not  
the council-house.

*Devadatta*

Sire, we rarely meet our King in  
the council-house, because it is not  
the palace garden.

*Queen*

The miserable dogs, grown fat upon  
the King's table-sweepings, dare dream  
of barking against their master ?  
King, is it time for debating in the  
council-chamber ? Is not the course  
clear before you ? Go with your  
soldiers and crush these miscreants.

*Vikram*

But our general himself is a foreigner.

*Queen*

Go yourself.

*Vikram*

Am I your misfortune, Queen,—a  
bad dream, a thorn in your flesh ?  
No, I will never move a step from  
here. I will offer them terms of  
peace. Who is it that has caused this  
mischief ? The Brahmin and the  
woman conspired to wake up the

sleeping snake from its hole. Those who are too feeble to protect themselves are the most thoughtless in causing disasters to others.

*Queen*

Oh the unfortunate land, and the unfortunate woman who is the Queen of this land.

*Vikram*

Where are you going ?

*Queen*

I am going to leave you.

*Vikram*

Leave me ?

*Queen*

Yes. I am going to fight the rebels.

*Vikram*

Woman, you mock me.

*Queen*

I take my farewell.

*King*

You dare not leave me.

*Queen*

I dare not stay by your side when  
I weaken you.

*King*

Go, proud woman. I will never  
ask you to turn back,—but claim no  
help from me. [QUEEN goes.

*Devadatta*

King, you allow her to go alone ?

*King*

She is not going. I do not believe  
her words.

*Devadatta*

I think she is in earnest.

*King*

It is her woman's wiles. She threatens me, while she wants to spur me into action; and I despise her methods. She must not think that she can play with my love. She shall regret it. Oh my friend, must I learn my lesson at last, that love is not for the King,—and learn it from that woman, whom I love like my doom? Devadatta, you have grown with me from infancy,—can you not forget, for a moment, that I am a king, and feel that I have a man's heart that knows pain?

*Devadatta*

My heart is yours, my friend, which is not only ready to receive your love, but your anger.

*King*

But why do you invite the snake  
into my nest ?

*Devadatta*

Your house was on fire,—I merely  
brought the news, and wakened you  
up. Am I to blame for that ?

*King*

What is the use of waking ? When  
all are mere dreams, let me choose my  
own little dream, if I can, and then  
die. Fifty years hence, who will re-  
member the joys and sorrows of this  
moment ? Go, Devadatta, leave me  
to my kingly loneliness of pain.

(Enters a COURTIER who is a foreigner.)

*Courtier*

We ask justice from your hands,  
King,—we, who came to this land  
with the Queen.

*King*

Justice for what ?

*Courtier*

It has come to our ears that false accusations against us are brought before you, for no other cause than that we are foreigners.

*King*

Who knows, if they are not true ? But so long as I trust you, can you not remain silent ? Have I ever insulted you with the least suspicion—the suspicions that are bred like maggots in the rotten hearts of cowards ? Treason I do not fear. I can crush it under my feet. But I fear to nourish littleness in my own mind.—You can leave me now. [The COURTIER goes.

## THE KING AND QUEEN 217

(*Enter MINISTER and DEVADATTA.*)

*Minister*

Sire, the Queen has left the palace,  
riding on her horse.

*King*

What do you say ? Left my  
palace ?

*Minister*

Yes, King.

*King*

Why did you not stop her ?

*Minister*

She left in secret.

*King*

Who brought you the news ?

*Minister*

The priest. He saw her riding  
before the palace temple.

*King*

Send for him.

*Minister*

But, Sire, she cannot be far. She has only just left. You can yet bring her back.

*King*

Bringing her back is not important. The great fact is that she left me.— Left me ! And all the King's soldiers and forts, and prisons and iron chains, could not keep fast this little heart of a woman.

*Minister*

Alias, King. Calumny, like a flood-burst, when the dyke is broken, will rush in from all sides.

*King*

Calumny ! Let the people's tongues rot with their own poison.

*Devadatta*

In the days of eclipse, men dare look at the midday sun through their broken pieces of glass, blackened with soot. Great Queen, your name will be soiled, tossed from mouth to mouth, but your light will ever shine far above all soiling.

*King*

Bring the priest to me. (**MINISTER goes.**) I can yet go to seek her, and bring her back. But is this my eternal task? That she should always avoid me, and I should ever run after the fugitive heart? Take your flight, woman, day and night, homeless, loveless, without rest and peace. (*Enters PRIEST.*) Go, go, I have heard enough, I do not want to know more. (*The PRIEST is about to go.*) Come back.—Tell me, did she come

down to the temple to pray with tears in her eycs ?

*Priest*

No, Sire. Only, for a moment, she checked her horse and turned her face to the temple, bowing her head low, —then rode away fast as lightning. I cannot say if she had tears in her eyes. The light from the temple was dim.

*King*

Tears in her eyes ? You could not even imagine such enormity? Enough. You may go. (*The PRIEST goes.*) My God, you know that all the wrong that I have done to her was that I loved her. I was willing to lose my heaven and my kingdom for her love. But they have not betrayed me, only she has.

(*Enters MINISTER.*)

*Minister*

Sire, I have sent messengers on horseback in pursuit of her.

*King*

Call them back. The dream has fled away. Where can your messengers find it ? Get ready my army. I will go to war myself, and crush the rebellion.

*Minister*

As you command. [Goes away.]

*Vikram*

Devadatta, why do you sit silent and sad ? The thief has fled, leaving the booty behind, and now I pick up my freedom. This is a moment of rejoicing to me. False, false friend, false are my words. Cruel pain pierces my heart.

*Devadatta*

You shall have no time for pain, or for love, now,—your life will become one stream of purpose, and carry your kingly heart to its great conquest.

*Vikram*

But I am not yet completely freed in my heart. I still believe she will soon come back to me, when she finds that the world is not her lover, and that man's heart is the only world for a woman. She will know what she has spurned, when she misses it ; and my time will come when, her pride gone, she comes back, and jealously begins to woo me.

(*Enters ATTENDANT.*)

*Attendant*

A letter from the Queen.

[*Gives the letter, and goes.*

*King*

She relents already. (*Reads the letter.*) Only this. Just two lines, to say that she is going to her brother in Kashmir, to ask him to help her to quell the rebellion in my kingdom. This is insult ! Help from Kashmir !

*Devadatta*

Lose no time in forestalling her,— and let that be your revenge.

*King*

My revenge ? You shall know it.

## ACT II.

*Tent in Kashmir*

(VIKRAM and the GENERAL.)

*General*

Pardon me, King, if I dare offer you advice in the interest of your kingdom.

*Vikram*

Speak to me.

*General*

The rebellion in our land has been quelled. The rebels themselves are fighting on your side. Why waste our strength and time in Kashmir when your presence in your own capital is so urgently needed ?

*Vikram*

The fight here is not over yet.

*General*

But Kumarsen, the Queen's brother, is already punished for his sister's temerity. His army is routed, he is hiding for his life. His uncle, Chandrasen, is only too eager to be seated upon the vacant throne. Make him the king, and leave this unfortunate country to peace.

*Vikram*

It is not for punishment that I stay here ; it is for fight. The fight has become like a picture to a painter. I must add bold lines, blend strong colours, and perfect it every day. My mind grows more and more immersed in it, as it blossoms into forms ; and I leave it with a sigh when it is finished. The destruction is merely its materials, out of which it takes its shape. It is a creation. It is beautiful as red bunches of *palash*, that break

out like a drunken fury, yet every one of its flowers delicately perfect.

*General*

But, Sire, this cannot go on for ever. You have other duties. The minister has been sending me message after message, entreating me to help you to see how this war is ruining your country.

*Vikram*

I cannot see anything else in the world but what is growing under my masterly hands. Oh, the music of swords! Oh, the great battles, that clasp your breast tight like hard embraces of love! Go, General, you have other works to do,—your advices flash out best on the points of your swords. (GENERAL goes.) This is deliverance. The bondage has fled of itself, leaving the prisoner free. Revenge is stronger than the thin

wine of love. Revenge is freedom,— freedom from the coils of cloying sweetness.

(*Enters GENERAL.*)

*General*

I can espouse a carriage coming towards our tent, perhaps bringing an envoy of peace. It has no escort of armed soldiers.

*King*

Peace must follow the war. The time for it has not yet come.

*General*

Let us hear the messenger first, and then,—

*King*

And then continue the war.

(*Enters a SOLDIER.*)

*Soldier*

The Queen has come asking for your audience.

*Vikram*

What do you say ?

*Soldier*

The Queen has come.

*Vikram*

Which Queen ?

*Soldier*

Our Queen, Sumitra.

*Vikram*

Go, General, see who has come.

[*The GENERAL and the SOLDIER go.*

*King*

This is the third time that she has come, vainly attempting to coax me away, since I have carried war into Kashmir. But these are no dreams—these battles. To wake up suddenly,

and then find again the same palace gardens, the flowers, the Queen, the long days made of sighs and small favours ! No, a thousand times, no. She has come to make me captive, to take me as her trophy from the war-field into her palace hall. She may as well try to capture the thunderstorms.

(*Enters GENERAL.*)

*General*

Yes, Sire, it is our own Queen who wants to see you. It breaks my heart that I cannot allow her to come freely into your presence.

*King*

This is neither the time, nor the place, to see a woman.

*General*

**But, Sire.**

*King*

No, no. Tell my guards to keep a strict watch at my tent door,—not for enemies; but for women.

[GENERAL goes.]

(Enters SHANKAR.)

*Shankar*

I am Shankar,—King Kumarsen's servant. You have kept me captive in your tent.

*King*

Yes, I know you.

*Shankar*

Your Queen waits outside your tent.

*King*

She will have to wait for me farther away.

*Shankar*

It makes me blush to say that she has come humbly to ask your pardon ; or, if that is impossible, to accept her punishment from your hand. For she owns that she alone was to blame,—and she asks you, in the name of all that is sacred, to spare her brother's country and her brother.

*King*

But you must know, old man, it is war,—and this war is with her brother, and not herself. I have no time to discuss the rights and wrongs of the question with a woman. But, being a man, you ought to know that when once a war is started, rightly or wrongly, it is our man's pride that must carry it on to the end.

*Shankar*

But do you know, Sire, you are carrying on this war with a woman, and she is your Queen ? Our King is merely espousing her cause, being her brother. I ask you, is it king-like, or man-like, to magnify a domestic quarrel into a war, carrying it from country to country ?

*King*

I warn you, old man, your tongue is becoming dangerous. You may tell the Queen, in my name, that when her brother, Kumarsen, owns his defeat and surrenders himself into our hands, the question of pardoning will then be discussed.

*Shankar*

That is as impossible as for the morning sun to kiss the dust of the

western horizon. My King will never surrender himself alive into your hands, and his sister will never suffer it.

*King*

Then the war must continue. But do you not think that bravery ceases to be bravery at a certain point, and becomes mere foolhardiness ? Your King can never escape me. I have surrounded him on all sides, and he knows it.

*Shankar*

Yes, he knows it, and also knows that there is a great gap.

*King*

What do you mean ?

*Shankar*

I mean death,—the triumphal gate through which he will escape you, if I know him right. And there waits his revenge. [He goes.

(*Enters ATTENDANT.*)

Sire, Chandrasen, and his wife Revati, Kumarsen's uncle and aunt, have come to see you.

*King*

Ask them in.

(*Enter CHANDRASEN and REVATI.*)

*King*

My obeisance to you both.

*Chandrasen*

May you live long.

*Revati*

May you be victorious.

*Chandrasen*

What punishment have you decided for him ?

*King*

If he surrenders I shall pardon him.

*Revati*

Only this, and nothing more? If tame pardon comes at the end, then why is there such preparation? Kings are not overgrown children, and war is no mere child's play.

*Vikram*

To rob was not my purpose, but to restore my honour. The head that bears the crown cannot bear insult.

*Chandrasen*

My son, forgive him. For he is mature neither in age nor in wisdom. You may deprive him of his right to the throne, or banish him, but spare him his life.

*King*

I never wished to take his life.

*Revati*

Then why such an army and arms ?  
 You kill the soldiers, who have done  
 you no harm, and spare him who is  
 guilty ?

*Vikram*

I do not understand you.

*Chandrasen*

It is nothing. She is angry with  
 Kumarsen for having brought our  
 country into trouble, and for giving  
 you just cause for anger, who are so  
 nearly related to us.

*Vikram*

Justice will be meted out to him  
 when he is captured.

*Revati*

I have come to ask you never to suspect that we are hiding him. It is the people. Burn their crops and their villages,—drive them with hunger, and then they will bring him out.

*Chandrasen*

Gently, wife, gently. Come to the palace, son, the reception of Kashmir awaits you there.

*King*

You go there now, and I shall follow you. (*They go out.*) Oh, the red flame of hell-fire. The greed and hatred in a woman's heart. Did I catch a glimpse of my own face in her face, I wonder? Are there lines like those on my forehead, the burnt tracks made by a hidden fire? Have my lips grown as thin and curved at

both ends as hers, like some murderer's knife ? No, my passion is for war,—it is neither for greed nor for cruelty ; its fire is like love's fire, that knows no restraint, that counts no cost, that burns itself, and all that it touches, either into a flame, or to ashes.

(*Enters ATTENDANT.*)

*Attendant*

The Brahmin, Devadatta, has come, awaiting your pleasure.

*King*

Devadatta has come ? Bring him in,—No, no, stop. Let me think,—I know him. He has come to turn me back from the battle-field. Brahmin, you undermined the river banks, and now, when the water overflows, you piously pray that it may irrigate your fields, and then tamely go back. Will

it not wash away your houses, and ruin the country ? The joy of the terrible is blind,—its term of life is short, and it must gather its plunder in fearful haste, like a mad elephant uprooting the lotus from the pond. Wise counsels will come, in their turn, when the great force is spent,—No, I must not see the Brahmin.

(*Enters AMARU, the chieftain of Trichur hills.*)

*Amaru*

Sire, I have come at your bidding,  
and I own you as my King.

*King*

You are the chief of this place ?

*Amaru*

Yes. I am the chief of Trichur.  
You are the King of many kings, and

I am your servant. I have a daughter, whose name is Ila. She is young and comely. Do not think me vain, when I say that she is worthy to be your spouse. She is waiting outside. Permit me, King, and I shall send her to you as the best greeting of this land of flowers. [He goes out.]

(Enters ILA with her ATTENDANT.)

### *King*

Ah ! She comes, as a surprise of dawn, when the moment before it seemed like a dark night. Come, maiden, you have made the battle-field forget itself. Kashmir has shot her best arrow, at last, to pierce the heart of the war-god. You make me feel that my eyes had been wandering among the wilderness of things, to find at last their fulfilment. But why do you stand so silent, with your eyes on the ground ? I can almost see a

trembling of pain in your limbs, whose intensity makes it invisible.

*Ila*

(*Kneeling.*) I have heard that you are a great King. Be pleased to grant me my prayer.

*King*

Rise up, fair maiden. This earth is not worthy to be touched by your feet. Why do you kneel in the dust ? There is nothing that I cannot grant you.

*Ila*

My father has given me to you. I beg myself back from your hands. You have wealth untold, and territories unlimited,—go and leave me behind in the dust ; there is nothing that you can want.

*King*

Is there, indeed, nothing that I can

want ? How shall I show you my heart ? Where is its wealth ? Where are its territories ? It is empty. Had I no kingdom, but only you—

*Ila*

Then first take my life,—as you take that of the wild deer of the forest, piercing her heart with your arrows,—

*King*

But why, child,—why such contempt for me ? Am I so utterly unworthy of you ? I have won kingdoms with the might of my arms. Can I not hope to beg your heart for me ?

*Ila*

But my heart is not mine. I have given it to one who left me months ago, promising to come back and meet me in the shade of our ancient forest. Days pass, and I wait, and the silence

of the forest grows wistful. If he find me not, when he comes back ! If he go away for ever, and the forest shadows keep their ancient watch for the love-meeting that remains eternally unfulfilled ! King, do not take me away,—leave me for him, who has left me, to find me again.

*Vikram*

What a fortunate man is he. But I warn you, girl, gods are jealous of our love. Listen to my secret. There was a time when I despised the whole world, and only loved. I woke up from my dream, and found that the world was there,—only my love burst as a bubble. What is his name, for whom you wait ?

*Ila*

He is Kashmir's King. His name is Kumarsen.

*Vikram*

Kumarsen !

*Ila*

Do you know him ? He is known to all. Kashmir has given its heart to him.

*Vikram*

Kumarsen ? Kashmir's King ?

*Ila*

Yes. He must be your friend.

*Vikram*

But do you not know that the sun of his fortune has set ? Give up all hope of him. He is like a hunted animal, running and hiding from one hole to another. The poorest beggar in these hills is happier than he.

*Ila*

I hardly understand you, King.

*Vikram*

You women sit in the seclusion of your hearts and only love. You do not know how the roaring torrent of the world passes by, and we men are carried away in its waves in all directions. With your sad, big eyes, filled with tears, you sit and watch, clinging to flimsy hope. But learn to despair, my child.

*Ila*

Tell me the truth, King. Do not deceive me. I am so very little and so trivial. But I am all his own. Where,—in what homeless wilds,—is my lover roaming ? I will go to seek him,—I, who never have been out of my house. Show me the way,—

*Vikram*

His enemy's soldiers are after him,— he is doomed.

*Ila*

But are you not his friend ? Will you not save him ? A king is in danger, and will you suffer it as a King ? Are you not honour-bound to succour him ? I know that all the world loved him. But where are they, in his time of misfortune ? Sire, you are great in power, but what is your power for, if you do not help the great ? Can you keep yourself aloof ? Then show me the way,—I will offer my life for him,—the one, weak woman.

*Vikram*

Love him, love him with all you have—Love him, who is the King of your precious heart. I have lost my 'love's heaven myself,—but let me have the happiness to make you happy. I will not covet your love.—The withered branch cannot hope to

blossom with borrowed flowers. Trust me. I am your friend. I will bring him to you.

*Ila*

Noble King. I owe you my life and my heaven of happiness.

*Vikram*

Go, and be ready with your bridal dress. I will change the tune of my music. (*Ila goes.*) This war is growing tiresome. But peace is insipid. Homeless fugitive, you are more fortunate than I am. Woman's love, like heaven's watchful eyes, follows you wherever you go in this world, making your defeat a triumph and misfortune splendid, like sunset clouds.

(*Enters DEVADATTA.*)

*Devadatta*

Save me from my pursuers.

*King*

Who are they ?

*Devadatta*

They are your guards, King. They kept me under strict watch for this everlasting half-hour. I talked to them of art and letters ; they were amused. They thought I was playing the fool to please them. Then I began to recite to them the best lyrics of Kalidas,—and it soothed this pair of yokels to sleep. In perfect disgust, I left their tent to come to you.

*King*

These guards should be punished for their want of taste in going off to sleep when the prisoner recited Kalidas.

*Devadatta*

We shall think of the punishment

later on. In the meanwhile, we must leave this miserable war and go back home. Once I used to think that only they died of love's separation, who were the favoured of fortune, delicately nurtured. But since I left home to come here, I have discovered that even a poor Brahmin is not too small to fall a victim to angered love.

*Vikram*

Love and death are not too careful in their choice of victims. They are impartial. Yes, friend, let us go back home. Only I have one thing to do before I leave this place. Try to find out, from the chief of Trichur, Kumar-sen's hiding-place. Tell him, when you find him, that I am no longer his enemy. And, friend, if somebody else is there with him,—if you meet her,—

*Devadatta*

Yes, yes, I know. She is ever in

our thoughts, yet she is beyond our words. She, who is noble, her sorrow has to be great.

*Vikram*

Friend, you have come to me like the first sudden breeze of spring. Now my flowers will follow, with all the memories of the past happy years.

[*DEVADATTA goes.*

(*Enters CHANDRASEN.*)

*Vikram*

I have glad tidings for you. I have pardoned Kumarsen.

*Chandrasen*

You may have pardoned him,—but now that I represent Kashmir, he must await his country's judgment at my hands. He shall have his punishment from me.

*Vikram*

What punishment ?

*Chandrasen*

He shall be deprived of his throne.

*Vikram*

Impossible. His throne I will restore to him.

*Chandrasen*

What right have you in Kashmir's throne ?

*Vikram*

The right of the victorious. This throne is now mine, and I will give it to him.

*Chandrasen*

You give it to him ! Do I not know proud Kumarsen, from his infancy ? Do you think he will accept his father's throne as a gift from you ? He can bear your vengeance, but not your generosity.

(*Enters a MESSENGER.*)

*Messenger*

The news has reached us that Kumarsen is coming in a closed carriage to surrender himself.

[*Goes out.*

*Chandrasen*

Incredible ! The lion comes to beg his chains ! Is life so precious ?

*Vikram*

But why does he come in a closed carriage ?

*Chandrasen*

How can he show himself ? The eyes of the crowd in the streets will pierce him, like arrows, to the quick. King, put out the lamp, when he comes, receive him in darkness. Do not let him suffer the insult of the light.

(*Enters DEVADATTA.*)

*Devadatta*

I hear that the King, Kumarsen, is coming to see you of his own will.

*Vikram*

I will receive him with solemn rituals,—with you as our priest. Ask my general to employ his soldiers to make preparation for a wedding festival.

(Enter the BRAHMIN ELDERS.)

*All*

Victory be to you.

*First Elder*

We hear that you have invited our King, to restore him to his throne,— Therefore we have come to bless you for

(Enters SHANKAR.)

the joy that you have given to Kash-mir.

*[They bless him, and the KING bows to them. The BRAHMINs go out.*

*Shankar*

(To CHANDRASEN.) Sire, is it true that Kumarsen is coming to surrender himself to his enemies ?

*Chandrasen*

Yes, it is true.

*Shankar*

Worse than a thousand lies. Oh my beloved King, I am your old servant, I have suffered pain that only God knows, yet never complained. But how can I bear this ? That you should travel through all the roads of Kashmir to enter your cage of prison ? Why did not your servant die before this day ?

(Enters a SOLDIER.)

*Soldier*

The carriage is at the door.

*King*

Have they no instruments at hand,  
—flutes and drums ? Let them strike  
a glad tune. (*Coming near the door.*)  
I welcome you, my kingly friend, with  
all my heart.

(*Enters SUMITRA, with a covered tray  
in her hands.*)

*Vikram*

Sumitra. My Queen !

*Sumitra*

King Vikram, day and night you  
sought him in hills and forests, spread-  
ing devastation, neglecting your people  
and your honour, and to-day he  
sends through me to you his coveted  
head,—the head upon which death  
sits even more majestic than his crown.

*Vikram*

My Queen !

*Sumitra*

Sire, no longer your Queen ; for  
merciful death has claimed me.

[*Falls and dies.*

*Shankar*

My King, my Master, my darling  
boy, you have done well. You have  
come to your eternal throne. God  
has allowed me to live for so long  
to witness this glory. And now, my  
days are done, and your servant will  
follow you.

(*Enters Ila, dressed in a bridal dress.*)

*Ila*

King, I hear the bridal music.  
Where is my lover ? I am ready

